

# Final Assessment Report

## Medieval Studies (BA, Minor)

### November 2020

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#### Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Medieval Studies programs (BA, Minor) delivered by the Department of Classical Studies and by St. Jerome's University were in good standing.

*"The Medieval Studies program at the University of Waterloo is presently in very good standing with a lot of creative energy at its centre. The program, the oldest of its kind in the country, has evolved over the decades and continues to exhibit remarkable strengths. This small program of high quality offers a multidisciplinary undergraduate major..."*

A total of 10 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, touching on governance of the program and improving the curriculum. 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 2023-2024.

#### Total Number of Students Registered (All Undergraduate levels) over the Past Three Years

	General	Honours	Co-op
Fall 2016	2	9	1
Fall 2015	2	5	0
Fall 2014	2	3	1

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#### 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 Medieval Studies programs (BA, minor) delivered by the Department of Classical Studies and St. Jerome's University. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on October 30, 2017. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes (with course outlines for all courses in the program); an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from a student survey; and 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 (Proposed External Reviewers), two arm's-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic: Dr. Elizabeth Cohen, a Professor in the

Department of History at York University, and Dr. Francine Michaud, a Professor in the Department of History at the University of Calgary.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University of Waterloo on October 1-2, 2018. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Steven Mock, Associate Professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Academic; Dean, Faculty of Arts; Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, Faculty of Arts; President and Vice-Chancellor, St. Jerome's University; Co-Directors of the program; Faculty members; staff and current students. The review team also had an opportunity to meet with representatives from the library.

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

### **Program characteristics**

**Three-Year General Medieval Studies:** This major provides students with i) a strong knowledge of medieval civilizations (especially Western European) and ii) a background in the study of history, literature, art, and other material culture. Throughout the degree, students progress in their cognitive ability to define, comprehend, and summarize complex problems, as well as to synthesize and evaluate information competently using the knowledge they acquire. To do this, students acquire basic research skill and solid oral and written communication strategies and skills. Students also develop in the affective domain and learn to work effectively with their peers and within the wider academic community (and beyond). Students with a three-year General degree can go on to further study outside of the discipline of Medieval Studies.

**Four-Year General Medieval Studies:** This major has the same objectives and outcomes as the three-year degree, as just described, but students in the four-year major acquire additional exposure to research techniques and oral and written communication strategies and skills. Students with a four-year General degree can go on to further post-graduate study outside of the discipline of Medieval Studies.

**Honours Medieval Studies:** The Honours Medieval Studies degree provides students with a detailed, complex and scholarly knowledge of medieval European history, literature, art, and other material culture, as well as an opportunity to gain a working knowledge of the Latin language. (Although this is not required in the Honours degree, advisors guide students with an interest in postgraduate work to take as much Latin as possible; students in the General program can also take Latin, if they so choose). The Honours degree gives students the necessary skills to go on to more advanced post-graduate study in the area of Medieval Studies, for which knowledge of Latin is required. Students in the Honours degree also develop particularly strong analytical and interpretative skills, which allow them to assess information and use their knowledge to creatively solve problems and propose innovative new solutions. Honours students

begin to experiment with primary research, acquire advanced research techniques, and demonstrate a mastery of communication both oral and written. They also, through close interaction with their peers and faculty members, develop excellent skills in the affective domain and are able, at the end of the degree, to work effectively and efficiently in a variety of settings.

**Minor (introduced in 2017-18):** The Minor in Medieval Studies consists of a package of eight courses (chosen by the student) that is intended to provide a secondary area of concentration for students who are majoring in other disciplines. Students choose between two pairs of core courses (MEDVL 105 or 115; MEDVL 205 or 260), and six other courses from the Medieval Studies list.

### **Summary of strengths, challenges and weaknesses based on self-study**

#### **Strengths**

- With comparatively few mandatory courses, the Medieval Studies program serves students with an interest in that time period particularly well in terms of offering a wide selection of relevant courses that all count toward the student's major – a beneficial byproduct of the program's widely interdisciplinary nature.
- International/experiential learning opportunities for students have blossomed over the course of the past 7 years, with a study abroad option at the [Herstmonceux Castle](#) and the Medieval Digital Research Arts for Graphical and Environmental Networks (DRAGEN) Lab.
- The rigour of the language training offered — especially in Latin, but also in Old English — prepares students well for the pursuit of graduate studies. Graduates of the program regularly pass the rigorous Medieval Latin graduate-level examinations at the University of Toronto's Centre for Medieval Studies.
- Students in Medieval courses, from the first year through to graduation, benefit from significant practice in producing rigorous, clear, and well-argued written output. As a discipline, Medieval Studies is rooted in the study of the written word, so its instructors work hard to impart transferable skills in this domain to students; Medieval Studies graduates are thus particularly well-equipped to assess and comment critically upon documentary materials, no matter what time period they were created.
- Smaller student numbers enable the Co-Directors to devote more attention to each student compared to larger programs.

#### **Challenges**

- The challenge of keeping track of changes in course offerings happening in all 14 contributing departments is the flip-side to the strength of interdisciplinary flexibility identified above.
- Data gathering for self-study reports is challenging for similar reasons.
- Lack of Co-Directors' input and control over departmental course offerings and timetabling for the vast majority of the Medieval Studies-relevant courses makes program integration and curricular structure a challenge.

- The absence of formal cross-appointments into Medieval Studies means that faculty members do not always have a high level of attachment to the program.
- Along with the external reviewers, we recognize that it would be desirable to increase the number of students who major in Medieval Studies.

### **Weaknesses**

- The availability of language course offerings (especially Latin, which is offered only in Fall and Winter terms) is somewhat inhibitive for students who want to pursue the co-op option.
- Lack of systematic travel bursaries for students which would support first-hand contact with the Medieval world.

### **Summary of key findings from the external reviewers**

The Medieval Studies program, an interdisciplinary program jointly administered by both institutions (University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University), is very well positioned to offer high-quality training in medieval studies in the major and minor streams. Many among the participating faculty who belong to the array of disciplines pertaining to the program (Classical Studies, English, French, German studies, History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies), are well established and innovative scholars in their respective fields.

While the review team remarked most favorably on the strengths of this small, high-quality program, it also identified opportunities to maintain and sustain its growth in light of a few areas for concern. Some of these areas have already been signaled by the Co-Directors in the self-study, particularly the issue of expanding enrollments. In addition, the consolidation of participatory governance is a priority for improvement.

### **Program response to external reviewers' recommendations**

#### **Recommendations**

1. The constitution of a solid governance structure, with clear terms of reference (membership rotation of representatives from the core disciplines of the program, regular meetings, etc.), to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Medieval Studies program.

**Response:** In 2017-2018, SJU passed, through its Senate Council, governance documents to clarify the position of Medieval Studies within that University's governance structure. Those documents clarified that Medieval Studies is a unit within the Office of the Vice-President & Academic Dean (VPAD), that the SJU co-Director reports directly to the SJU VPAD, and that the program Directors shall benefit from the support of an advisory board comprised of UW and SJU

faculty members who teach and research in Medieval Studies. The Co-Directors agree that a similar structure should exist at UW.

The Co-Directors (lead: Porreca) will, thus, draft governance documents for the Medieval Studies program, with a view to:

1. Clarifying the role of the interdisciplinary program within the Faculty of Arts and in relation to the Department of Classical Studies and St. Jerome's University;
2. Establishing a joint "Advisory Board" which draws on faculty members appointed to those academic units that contribute significantly to the list of Medieval Studies approved courses, as identified on pp. 49-50 of the October 2017 Program Review report (i.e., History, Classical Studies, Études françaises, Italian Studies, English Language & Literature, Germanic & Slavic Studies, Religious Studies, Philosophy);
3. Establishing the roles and responsibilities of the Co-Directors;
4. Establishing the roles and responsibilities of participating faculty members and departments, including appropriate rotation of responsibilities over time.

During prior iterations of this program's review cycle, the creation of an Advisory Board had been attempted, but was hampered by the fact that colleagues from other academic units were uncertain about having any service they perform for the Medieval Studies program recognized by their respective Chairs. The reviewers recognized this challenge and acknowledged that, as a consequence, fulsome participation from a sufficient number of interdisciplinary faculty members did not occur, and that early iterations of the Advisory Board had been set aside. These circumstances still prevail, and the reviewers, therefore, requested that the Faculty of Arts provide some guidance as to how to encourage participation in interdisciplinary program governance.

It would be similarly beneficial for the governance documents adopted for the Medieval Studies program to receive institutional approval at the departmental and faculty levels.

With regard to the Advisory Board, the intent is to have representation from each of the significant contributing departments and units, and to bring these representatives together twice a year through a roundtable lunch. This is the model adopted by Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) and it has been proven effective over a number of years.

***Dean of Arts: Comment (May 2021)***

*The best advice I can give on obtaining buy-in for recognition of service done to the Medieval Studies program is for the Co-Directors to meet regularly with the Chairs of the relevant departments, along with the instructors concerned. Often Chairs may simply need a reminder that*

*their Department also supports an interdisciplinary program, not only with teaching activity but also with some degree of service.*

2. The program should develop a systematic mapping of the undergraduate curriculum indicating a clear progression of expectations for majors and minors and giving guidance about how to select and integrate courses from a variety of disciplines.

**Response:** The Co-Directors will seek the assistance of CTE for an interdisciplinary curriculum mapping exercise, drawing inspiration from existing curriculum maps from other interdisciplinary programs, such as Gender and Social Justice or Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). The resulting map will be considered and modified at a future meeting of the Advisory Board discussed under Recommendation 1.

3. Full information on the program options and a timely account of offerings available in each academic term should be accessible on the program's website, not only for the benefit of the current students, but equally to attract prospective students.

**Response:** There is both a short-term and a long-term response to this recommendation. The former involves establishing a regular schedule of Medieval Studies website updates that follows closely upon the release of course offering information in upcoming terms from the Registrar's Office. This involves someone manually scanning through each contributing department's upcoming course offerings and listing the Medieval Studies-relevant courses on our website. This short-term response needs to be reiterated during each upcoming term until the long-term response becomes active. In the longer term, and as recommended in previous program reviews, it is anticipated that the Registrar's Office will enable the automatic aggregation of the relevant data on course offerings and send it to the Co-Directors for uploading to the Medieval Studies website.

4. The program website should also publicize the Medieval Studies students' skills and achievements from traditional forms of research and writing, public outreach and the latest digital technologies.

**Response:** The Co-Directors will seek the assistance of Alumni Affairs and both Deans' Offices (main-campus and SJU) to better understand how to obtain information about alumni as well as the opportunities for public outreach. Alumni profiles on the program's website are a most likely outcome, and these will need to be refreshed and supplemented regularly as students graduate.

5. The entire chronology of the Middle Ages (c. 400 - c. 1500) should be covered in at least one of the MEDVL core courses. This scope should be clearly indicated in both the course title and its rubric.

**Response:** The course that already does this chronological coverage is HIST/MEDVL 260. The course's title does not match the contents, as the reviewers have pointed out, so the Co-Directors are proposing to change the title to reflect the full chronological range of the material it covers.

6. With the History Department, the program should look for ways to offer regular sections of the capstone HIST 450 that are better suited to the inclusion of the Medieval Studies students.

**Response:** Over the course of discussions during Fall 2018, the History Department has agreed to provide annually either one HIST 450 (1.0 unit) or two HIST 422 (0.5 units each) that are medieval in content.

7. Diversify and then rotate entry-level courses on the Middle Ages with broad appeal to attract the attention of the larger campus community.

**Response:** Over the past two years, faculty members in Medieval Studies have developed collaboratively an online course, "Medieval Monsters" with the assistance of CEL (Bednarski leads). This course, which will be offered in Fall 2021, draws on approximately ten medievalists from different disciplines and areas of specialization and, through the use of a common theme (monsters), will expose students to interdisciplinary methodologies. It is hoped this course will attract a large number of students and, potentially, increase interest in majoring or minoring in Medieval Studies.

Additional possibilities are to be discussed at a future meeting of the Advisory Board.

8. Build alignment with the co-op program and further linkages to the EDGE initiative to stir attention and enhance experiential learning.

**Response:** In collaboration with the Department of Classical Studies, the program shall investigate the possibilities for online offerings of LAT 101 and 102, since the sequence of language class offerings has been identified as one of the principal obstacles to the greater integration of coop students in Medieval Studies (and Classical Studies as well). Along with the curriculum mapping exercise identified in the response to Recommendation 2 above, the program shall create a greater alignment of experiential learning outcomes that are already available through current study-abroad exchange programs, such as those identified for the Herstmonceux Castle exchange, to reflect EDGE outcomes.

9. Seek ways, informal and institutional, to encourage fuller participation and a greater sense of "ownership" of the program among faculty with medieval expertise. These would include more prominent presence on the website, more regular and rotating roles on the Advisory Board and some form of recognition by the administration of that service.

**Response:** See response to Recommendation 1 above.

10. To increase flexibility and provide opportunities to try out new courses, the reviewers support Medieval Studies' plan to set up "Topics in Medieval Studies" offerings at several levels. Most ARTS programs allow for Special Topics course codes for these reasons and this would bring Medieval Studies in alignment with those other programs.

**Response:** Propose MEDVL 291, 391, and 491 as topics-based courses to Undergraduate Advisory Group (UGAG).



**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 constitution of a solid governance structure, with clear terms of reference (membership rotation of representatives from the core disciplines of the program, regular meetings, etc.), to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Medieval Studies program.	a.) Create a Constitution for the Medieval Studies program at UW to align with SJU's and create an "Advisory Board" of contributing faculty members * Constitution to define roles & responsibilities of → Co-Directors → Department of Classical Studies → representation of faculty members from contributing departments b.) Need for Deans' "note of recognition" that service to Medieval Studies counts as faculty-level or potentially departmental service c.) Implementation of twice-yearly roundtable lunches for all participating departments	David Porreca (lead) With support by: Steven Bednarski (SJU) Dean of Arts (UW) VPAD (SJU)  <i>Dean has advised the Co-Directors that they should liaise with Chairs of relevant Departments in order to discuss service recognition (see above, pp. 5-6).</i>	a.) constitution circulated Spring 2021 b.) Dean's note in Fall 2021 c.) First meeting of Advisory Board to approve Constitution: Fall 2021  <i>Re "Dean's note": the suggestion that the Dean write to Chairs of participating departments re service roles of participating faculty members was removed from the list of recommendations.</i>
2.	The program should develop a systematic mapping of the undergraduate curriculum indicating a clear progression of expectations for majors and minors and giving guidance about how to select and integrate courses from a variety of disciplines.	a.) Seek assistance from CTE for interdisciplinary curriculum mapping b.) Investigate curriculum maps from other interdisciplinary programs (e.g., GSJ, PACS) * Curriculum map to be considered/modified by Advisory Board	-David Porreca & Steven Bednarski -With support from CTE	a.) consultation with CTE Winter-Spring 2021 b.) Draft curriculum map ready for Fall 2021 Advisory Board meeting discussion

3.	Full information on the program options and a timely account of offerings available in each academic term should be accessible on the program's website not only for the benefit of the current students, but equally to attract prospective students.	<p>* (short-term): Establish regular schedule of website updates that follows closely upon release of course offering information for subsequent terms</p> <p>* (longer term): As recommended in previous program reviews, the Registrar's Office should aggregate data and make it available to the Co-Directors</p>	Lead: David Porreca Brigitte Schneebeli UW Registrar's Office	Each term by 15 May, 15 September, and 19 January to coincide with the course selection periods for each term On agenda for Fall 2021 Advisory Board meeting
4.	The program website should also publicize the Medieval Studies students' skills and achievements from traditional forms of research and writing, public outreach and the latest digital technologies.	<p>* Seek assistance from Alumni Affairs and Deans' Office (both main campus and SJU)</p> <p>* Contact alumni</p>	David Porreca Steven Bednarski Brigitte Schneebeli	Ongoing
5.	The entire chronology of the Middle Ages (c. 400- c. 1500) should be covered in at least one of the MEDVL core courses. This scope should be clearly indicated in both the course title and its rubric.	* Adjust title of HIST/MEDVL 260 to reflect full date range of material actually considered in that class	Steven Bednarski History UGAG rep	Done, approved, and to be integrated into the 2021-2022 Academic Calendar
6.	With the History Department, the program should look for ways to offer regularly sections of the capstone HIST 450 that are better suited to the inclusion of the Medieval Studies students.	<p>a.) SJU HIST has agreed to provide annually either one HIST 450 (1.0 credit) to Medieval Studies or two HIST 422 (0.5 credits each).</p> <p>b.) Plan must be modified to reflect these two options</p>	Steven Bednarski Chair of History (UW)  David Porreca Brigitte Schneebeli	<p>a.) Agreement-in-principle already reached with Chair of History</p> <p>b.) Plan changes were approved by UGAG in April 2019</p>
7.	Diversify and then rotate entry-level courses on the Middle Ages with broad appeal to attract the attention of the larger campus community.	<p>a.) "Monsters" team-taught online course in development with CEL</p> <p>b.) Discuss additional possibilities with Advisory Board</p>	Steven Bednarski (lead) + contributing colleagues David Porreca Anne-Marie Rasmussen Gabriel Niccoli	<p>a.) Course creation is ongoing, First offering is planned for Fall 2021</p> <p>b.) Fall 2021</p>



			Andrew Moore + others	
8.	Build alignment with the co-op program and further linkages to the EDGE initiative to stir attention and enhance experiential learning.	* Investigate possibilities for online offerings of LAT 101 & 102 in alternating terms * Align experiential learning outcomes available through current exchange programs (e.g., Herstmonceux) to reflect EDGE outcomes	David Porreca & Department of Classical Studies	Discussed at departmental meeting, April 2019 → Resources not available at the time; pandemic has forced all teaching to go online in any case.
9.	Seek ways, informal and institutional, to encourage fuller participation and a greater sense of “ownership” of the program among faculty with medieval expertise. These would include more prominent presence on the website, more regular and rotating roles on the advisory committee and some form of recognition by the administration of that service.	* See responses to Recommendation 1 above		
10.	To increase flexibility and provide opportunities to try out new courses, the reviewers support Medieval Studies’ plan to set up open rubric, “Topics in Medieval Studies” offerings at several levels.	* Propose MEDVL 291, 391, and 491 as topics-based courses to UGAG	David Porreca & Department of Classical Studies	Done, approved, and to be integrated into the 2021-2022 Academic Calendar


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

Date of next program review \_\_\_\_\_ **2023-2024**  
Date

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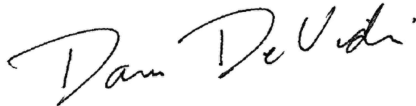
**Signatures of Approval**

  6 May 2021  
Chair/Director Date

 13 October 2021  
AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only) Date

 4 May 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.

 1 March, 2020  
Associate Vice-President, Academic Date  
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

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