

Final Assessment Report

Mennonite Studies (Minor)

September 2017

Summary of the Program Review

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the Mennonite Studies (MS)¹ Minor delivered by Conrad Grebel University College and the Faculty of Arts. A self-study (Volume I) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on July 11, 2016. The self-study presented the program description and learning outcomes, an assessment of this program, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). Appended were the course outlines for all courses in the program and the CVs (Volume II) for each full-time faculty member associated with the MS Minor.

Two arm's-length external reviewers (Volume III), (Dr. Steven Bednarski, Professor of History and Medieval Studies, St. Jerome's University/ University of Waterloo and Dr. Stefan Idziak, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy, University of Waterloo) were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic.

They reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit on November 7th, 2016. The visit included interviews with the Acting Associate Dean of Arts, Director of Mennonite Studies, Faculty members, Liaison Librarian and meeting with current students.

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

Mennonite Studies (MS) is an interdisciplinary program of study in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo. It provides students with the opportunity to gain specialized knowledge about Mennonites through completion of courses from various disciplines.

Mennonites in Canada and around the world represent a fascinating diversity of religious expression and cultural practice. In fact, Waterloo Region and southwestern Ontario contain perhaps the greatest degree of Mennonite pluralism in the world. As such, the program provides a guide to learn about the history, beliefs, and culture of a unique population that

¹ As of June 25, 2018 a new course indicator (MENN) was adopted and replaced MS.

surround the University of Waterloo community. Courses in the program explore the past and present lives and thought of Mennonites, in all their variety.

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

Strengths:

- An exceptional on-site Library and Archives that specializes in Mennonite Studies research resources
- Opportunities for students to obtain experience and skill working with primary sources in the Archives
- An abundance of community connections – individuals, organizations, and places – that provide opportunities for experiential education, field trips, fieldwork, and learning partnerships
- Strong teaching and good enrolments in Mennonite Studies courses despite the low number of graduates
- The presence in the Conrad Grebel residence and in the UW student body of many students of Mennonite identity or background who are interested in their present-day and historic beliefs and traditions (a good consumer base)
- Regular course offerings make the 8-course Minor easy to complete
- Many Mennonite-related events in the community and at Conrad Grebel are available for student participation
- High level of student satisfaction with the courses and the program

Weaknesses:

- Low number of graduates over time. We have had 5 graduates in 10 years (2 currently enrolled in the plan).
- Limited visibility and awareness of Mennonite Studies as a plan offering
- Loss of Literature/Arts specialist due to retirement
- Lack of time for promotion of the Minor on the part of faculty and staff

Challenges:

- UW branding does not typically emphasize the Arts
- Declining enrolment in some Arts disciplines, especially Religious Studies which is often a connection and path into Mennonite Studies
- Difficulty getting students to attend events outside of class
- Despite active research and community education program, getting students to enroll in the Minor is a real challenge - it is not viewed as valuable

Summary of key findings from the external reviewers

The Mennonite Studies Minor is a mission-central program that should continue despite low enrolment. The program is of intrinsic interest to the mission of Conrad Grebel University College, to the Mennonite Community, to the Faculty of Arts, and the broader University. Mennonite Studies, moreover, requires little in the way of direct support as it draws almost entirely upon courses offered by other units. Given the low cost associated with this program, and its centrality to mission and to local and regional Mennonite culture, Mennonite Studies remains an important program despite weak enrolments.

The reviewers do note that the loss of a full-time specialist in Mennonite Literature has had an impact on the breadth of the program, as well as the impending loss through retirement of Kenneth Hull, Associate Professor of Music and Director of the Institute for Worship and the Arts. In light of effectively two full-time faculty members leaving, the reviewers hope that future hires at Conrad Grebel can further contribute to providing courses for the program.

Core faculty involved in the MS Minor are very clearly engaged with the topic and are enthusiastic to share their knowledge. The research activity of the core faculty over the last few years is acceptable, especially given the teaching and administrative loads they carry. The research activity easily demonstrates that the program's faculty members maintain the expertise needed to deliver the core courses of the Minor.

Program response to external reviewer recommendations

Recommendations

1. Identify a set of degree level expectations and learning outcomes, and make them visible online and in print advertising.

Response

The program accepts this recommendation and will draw on the objectives now listed in the core required courses and also generalize them to suit the whole Minor.

2. Have the Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies Advisory Group (IAMS) take a greater leadership role to help guide and shape the program, particularly in light of upcoming retirements.

Response

The program thinks that perhaps the review team misunderstood the IAMS mandate and its relationship to the Mennonite Studies (MS) Minor. One of the recommendations of the last program review in 2010 was to bring the teaching and research components of Mennonite studies at Conrad Grebel more closely together. Up until then IAMS had functioned solely as a research, publishing, and public education institute, while the Mennonite Studies Minor (the teaching component) was overseen by the College Dean or a faculty member. Following the last review, the Minor was deliberately brought under the oversight of the Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies Advisory Group, and thus IAMS gained a greater leadership role in the program. A faculty member on IAMS continues to serve as the Director of MS, given that the IAMS Director is currently the

College's Archivist-Librarian (without faculty status). The program will work at bringing greater clarity to the governance of MS and the Minor plan. It should be noted that there are no administrative time releases attached to leadership in Mennonite Studies.

3. Establish an independent MS rubric and cross-list, where appropriate and possible, courses offered by other units.

Response

The program is pleased by this recommendation, despite the small number of courses that would be listed under a Mennonite Studies course code. The program has already inquired about the process for creating a new course code and, if approved, hopes to have this in place for 2018-19.

4. Cross-list ARTS 125 with MS 125 and HIST and / or RS courses to improve visibility and enrolment.

Response

The program has been well aware that the low visibility of this course is due, in part, to its Arts code (recommended by the Arts Undergrad Office when the interdisciplinary course was created in 2013). The program has already put in a request to the Religious Studies Department for a cross-listing as the program feels that RS is most appropriate given that there are already two required courses in History (247, 348) and just one in RS (344).

5. Create a Special Topics or Directed Readings course within the MS rubric if the enrolment in MS grows significantly.

Response

The program will happily give some thought to this recommendation after the MS rubric is created; this is contingent on faculty resources to offer a special topics course, as well as student demand. Conrad Grebel recently initiated a named Fellowship program in Mennonite Studies that will occasionally bring a Visiting Scholar to the campus to engage in research, archival consulting, public education, and perhaps teaching on their area of expertise. In the future this could create opportunities for special topics courses, in addition to potential offerings by regular faculty.

6. Expand upon the experiential learning / primary research project conducted in HIST 247 to allow for greater library and archive internship work elsewhere in the curriculum.

Response

The collaboration between HIST 247 (Mennonite History) and the Mennonite Archives of Ontario (at Grebel) in 2015 that led to a year-long public exhibit on conscientious objection in World War Two, was very successful. The program will work at incorporating this as an ongoing component of this particular course and will explore options for similar assignments in other MS courses, such as Arts 125, or History 348/RS 344. As well, the Archives Internship is in the development stage, which will allow students to explore and develop their skills in historical research and archives work, and assist the Archives itself in processing collections and developing exhibits. Initially, we expect this to be a non-credit option, but hope that it evolves into a for-credit course under the MS rubric or as a

History course. We are confident that there will be students keen to undertake this experiential learning option, given the student volunteers that we now have, and given the History Department's Applied History specialization and new departmental co-op option.

7. Make explicit in print and online other experiential learning components of the MS Minor, such as opportunities to interact with local members of the Mennonite community. Standardize and promote the experiential learning components on the program.

Response

The program will try to make the experiential components of the MS Minor more explicit in the course descriptions, syllabi, and advertising. Several of the required MS courses include regular field trips and other activities that expose students to Mennonite individuals and agencies/organizations in the local community. These learning experiences cannot be completely standardized, given that instructors frequently respond to opportunities in the community as they arise. However, the program intends to have conversation about how experiential learning might be elevated to a more central and distinctive feature of the Minor.

8. Advertise at other Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) and Waterloo locations.

Response

The program is committed to developing more online and print materials to advertise the Plan at UW, focusing on academic units where we think there might be most interest.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Identify a set of degree level expectations and learning outcomes, and make them visible online and in print advertising;	The program will draw on the objectives now listed in the core required courses and also generalize them to suit the whole Minor.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group and Conrad Grebel Dean.	A key participant was on sabbatical leave in fall 2017; these will be developed in winter and spring 2018.
2.	Have IAMS take a greater leadership role to help guide and shape the program, particularly in light of upcoming retirements;	IAMS does have leadership in guiding and shaping the program and will make its program needs known to the College Dean in light of upcoming retirements.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group.	No particular action required. The Dean is aware of the program needs and currently sits on the IAMS committee. A search is underway in winter 2018 to replace one retirement that will maintain the church music and worship components of the program.
3.	Establish an independent MS rubric and cross-list, where appropriate and possible, courses offered by other units;	The program has already inquired about the process for creating a new course code and, if approved, hopes to have this in place for 2018-19.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group and Conrad Grebel Dean.	Work to begin spring 2017, for approval in 2017-18 and activation in 2018-19
4.	Cross-list ARTS 125 with MS 125 and HIST and / or RS courses to improve visibility and enrolment;	The program has already put in a request to the	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite	Work towards approval in 2017-18 and activation in 2018-19.

		Religious Studies Department for a cross-listing.	Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group, Religious Studies Department, and Conrad Grebel Dean.	Note: as of winter 2018, RS has declined the cross-list and the IAMS committee has decided to pursue cross-listing of Arts only with a new MS rubric.
5.	Create a Special Topics or Directed Readings course within the MS rubric if the enrolment in MS grows significantly;	The program will give some thought to this after the MS course rubric is created; this is contingent on faculty resources to offer a special topics course in the program as well as student demand.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group and Conrad Grebel Dean.	For discussion and possible offering in 2018-19 or 2019-20. As of winter 2018, a specific topics course has been developed and will be moved forward for approval where required.
6.	Expand upon the experiential learning / primary research project conducted in HIST 247 to allow for greater library and archive internship work elsewhere in the curriculum;	The program will incorporate library-archives assignments as an ongoing component of HIST 247 and will explore options for similar assignments in other MS courses, such as Arts 125 and Hist 348/344. The program will develop an Archives Internship that will allow students to explore and develop their skills in historical	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group, Archivist, and Conrad Grebel Dean.	The program will develop an internship framework during the 2017-18 academic year for introduction in 2018-19. As of winter 2018, a non-credit archival internship award has been developed and publicized at Conrad Grebel and to relevant depts. at UW and other AFIW.

		research and archives work, and assist the Archives itself in processing collections and developing exhibits.		
7.	Make explicit in print and online other experiential learning components of the MS minor, such as opportunities to interact with local members of the Mennonite community. Standardize and promote the experiential learning components on the program;	The program will make the experiential components of the MS Minor more explicit in our course descriptions, syllabi, and advertising. The program will discuss whether standardization of these is possible or practical.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group, Instructors of MS courses, and Conrad Grebel Dean.	The program will develop a plan for this in 2017-18
8.	Advertise at other AFIW and Waterloo locations.	The program will develop more online and print materials to advertise the Plan at UW, focusing on academic units where The program think there might be most interest.	Director of Mennonite Studies Minor, working with Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (IAMS) Advisory Group, Conrad Grebel Communications staff, and relevant academic units at UW.	Work will begin spring 2017 and be ongoing. A new info sheet and poster for the minor was created, highlighting its value for students pursuing vocations education, social services, healthcare, history professions, for example. This was sent to relevant units at UW and

				the AFIW. There appears to be growing knowledge and interest in the minor but no new students have signed into the plan as of yet.
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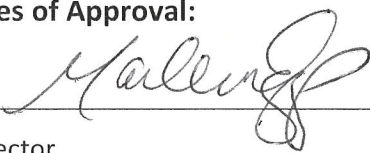
The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of Conrad Grebel shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.



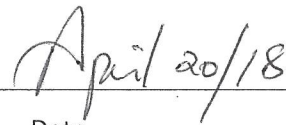
Date of next program review: _____ **2023**

Date

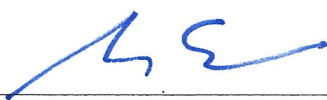
Signatures of Approval:



Chair/Director



Date



AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only)



Date

Faculty Dean

Date

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

Date

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

Date