

Final Assessment Report

Studies in Islam (Minor, Diploma) and Arabic Language (Certificates, Diploma)

October 2019

Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Studies in Islam (SI) and Arabic Language programs delivered by Renison University College were in good standing.

“We think that Studies in Islam (SI) is a program in good standing. It has a clear perspective for its administrative home (SI will become part of the unit Culture and Language Studies) and academic development (SI will be renamed Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures; the minor will also be revised in terms of required courses and elective courses)”.

A total of 4 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, to review course offerings, and update the program name and administrative structure. 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 2024-25.

Total Number of Students with a Degree Graduating with:

	SI Minor	SI Diploma	Arabic Language I (Certificate)	Arabic Language II (Certificate)	Arabic Diploma
2018	3	0	2	1	0
2017	3	0	1	0	0
2016	2	0	3	1	0
2015	0	0	1	2	0

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 Studies in Islam (Minor, Diploma) and Arabic Language (Certificates, Diploma) programs delivered by Renison University College. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on February 26, 2019. The self-study (Volume I)

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

From Volume III, two arm's-length reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic: Dr. Peter Frick, Professor of Religious Studies, and Dr. Sonny Lee, Professor of Chemistry.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on April 1, 2019. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Academic; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; President and Vice-Chancellor of Renison; Acting Dean of Renison; Program Director; 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

The Studies in Islam (SI) program is radically inter-disciplinary, working from the fundamental assumption that the totality of what we might call Islamic civilization is rich, multifaceted, and diversely manifested throughout many periods of history and within a mosaic of cultures. Therefore, this program seeks to present multiple perspectives, and, in doing so, to build bridges of understanding and foster meaningful dialogue. SI is an interdisciplinary academic minor that introduces students to the diversity of Islam and Muslims through courses that explore contemporary issues, Arabic language, Islamic civilization and culture, Islamic art, various aspects of Islamic thought and theology, Islamic history, and much more. The SI Minor is designed to challenge students to see their own disciplines through the lens of Islamic civilization and to see Islam through their disciplines. It introduces students to a mosaic of Muslim cultures and civilizations. The goal of this program is to help students discover the history and contributions of Islam as a crucial part of our shared, global heritage. Students can thus engage Islam in the fine arts, language and literature, drama, history, politics, science, anthropology, social development, gender and sex, and a myriad of other disciplines.

Students enrolled in any degree program may pursue a Minor in Studies in Islam and one of two Certificates in Arabic Language. Students enrolled in any non- or post-degree academic plan may pursue the Diploma in Studies in Islam and the Diploma in Arabic Language.

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

Strengths

- Relevance to society: SI is a program relevant to societal needs, responding to the current global condition through intercultural education and building awareness.
- Adding value to other programs: SI courses add value to many other University of Waterloo programs as evidenced by cross listed courses with East Asian Studies, Fine Arts, Religious Studies and Medieval Studies.
- Excellence in teaching: Consistently high student evaluations of SI courses and instructors is a testament to the program's commitment to providing high quality teaching experiences for our students.
- Unique University/community partnerships: SI supports and enhances the student experience through a variety of experiential learning opportunities. Through a well-established university/community lecture and workshop series, language conversation circles, community volunteer opportunities, and various other in and out of class opportunities, students are exposed to a number of learning experiences.
- Internationalization: SI is well-positioned to build international student exchanges as well as offering courses in cooperation with universities internationally. Work on several proposals with institutions in Spain, Turkey, Indonesia, Oman and other places is ongoing.

Challenges

- Marketing and promotion: One of the key challenges has been lack of support in marketing and promotion of the program. While SI was a UW program housed at Renison, in the first few years of our existence, there was minimal administrative and marketing support available for us. The program has tried to promote the SI Minor and SI courses every term with Arts advisors and through other channels, but needs much more help in this area.
- Arabic language certificate qualification: The self-study revealed that students are not clear about how to claim their language certificates. Hence, several students who qualified to receive the certificates did not claim them when they declared their intention to graduate.
- Enrollment: As an Arts Minor, enrollment numbers are impacted by the co-operative program on main campus. Many students are interested in taking SI courses but in many cases their program timeline does not allow the accommodation of these courses.
- Development and fundraising: another challenge has been in the area of development and fund raising. As over 99% of our students come from main campus, there is a great deal of potential to raise funds among UW alumni for the SI program. Since the program is housed at Renison, the Development office only has access to Renison alumni, something that does not benefit the program directly.

Summary of key findings from the external reviewers

Reviewers' stated: *"We think that Studies in Islam (SI) is a program in good standing. It has a clear perspective for its administrative home (SI will become part of the unit Culture and Language Studies) and academic development (SI will be renamed Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures; the minor will also be revised in terms of required courses and elective courses)".*

Program Response to External Reviewer Recommendations

Recommendations

- 1. Change of Program Name:** Since the submission of the Self-Study in 2017, the academic dean at Renison has convened a Studies in Islam Advisory Task Force that met two times, once in each of October and November 2018. The conclusion of the task force coincides with our own recommendation to change the name of the program. The Academic Council of Renison has approved a change in nomenclature from Studies in Islam to Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures. We fully approve of this change as it describes the actual teaching areas of the program more accurately. This recommendation is already in the process of being implemented.

Response

In December 2018, the Studies in Islam (SI) Advisory Task Force proposed a new name for SI, "Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures." The name was deemed most appropriate for the program—this would allow Religious Studies (RS) aspects to be kept within the program, while more fully opening up its interdisciplinary potential. This also allows the program to differentiate itself from RS and Political Science, among others. And, it allows the program to focus on areas of strength at Renison, namely language teaching and Religious Studies. The proposed name was approved by Renison's Academic Council on March 8, 2019 and UW's Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Affairs Group on April 4, 2019.

- 2. Administrative integration into an existing Renison Academic Unit:** A parallel process to the change in nomenclature is the integration of SI/ Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures into the existing unit Culture and Languages. Integration will do much to improve the continuity, stability, and accountability of the program and place it on equal footing with other, more established programs at Renison.

Response

The SI Advisory Task Force agreed that smaller programs are most vulnerable when they're out on their own – in times of financial pressures, for example, they become low-hanging fruit for cuts, without a larger "home" program which can speak for them with a strong voice. Given SI's focus on culture and language teaching, the task force concluded that the most

appropriate home and natural fit for SI is within the Culture and Language Studies Department. The merger was approved at Renison's Academic Council on Feb. 8, 2019, and came into full effect on May 1, 2019.

- 3. Hiring full-time Director and Faculty (commitment made):** Similar to recommendation 2, a tenure-track faculty hire will aid continuity and stability while also enhancing program scholarship and research. Ideally, a second full-time tenure-track position would strengthen the program even more.

Response

Now that Studies in Islam has moved into the Department of Culture and Language Studies at Renison, it receives significant management from the Chair of CLS and administrative assistance from CLS's two staff persons. This reduces the need for a full-time Director of Studies in Islam. Instead, the Department has instituted a Coordinator of Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures. This position is assumed by a full-time faculty member in SI, with responsibilities for planning SI course offerings, holding special events, and collaborating on matters related to SI. This parallels the administrative structure of other units in CLS: for example, the Department has a Coordinator of Humanities and a Coordinator of Chinese Language and Culture.

The program strongly agrees that more full-time faculty are necessary. The SI Advisory Task Force agreed that it would make the most sense for a first tenure-track hire to be advertised in the area of Arabic language and culture, and for a second to be advertised in Islamic Studies. In this way, the focus is on two of Renison's strengths – language teaching and Religious Studies; SI also has responsibilities under the shared disciplines equity agreement in RS, and so a hire who can teach in this area makes even more sense.

After the task force completed its work, changes in tuition-based funding by the Province complicated plans for new hires. Nonetheless, on January 11, 2019, Renison's Academic Council approved the creation of a new tenure track assistant professor in Arabic language and culture. A full search committee was struck by Renison's Academic Council on May 13, 2019, and the position was advertised beginning in August. The search is taking place during the Fall 2019 term, for a projected faculty start date of July 1, 2020. It is hoped that a second tenure track hire (Islamic Studies) will be possible in the following year. Also, effective, September 1, 2019, a frequent sessional was converted into a fractional-load definite-term lecturer position, in order to provide increased stability to the program and better security to its instructors.

- 4. Review of course offering** (required courses, new courses, possible deletion of/addition to current elective courses): A course offering review is essential to maintain the relevance of courses (especially those cross-listed from other departments) to program goals. This must

be done on the basis of broad consulting, including course instructors, if possible. The creation of a curriculum map would be ideal.

Response

An initial review of the Studies in Islam plan took place during Winter 2019, resulting in a number of changes approved by Renison's Academic Council on March 8, 2019 and the Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Affairs Group on April 4, 2019:

- New Arabic subject code: To reflect the differentiation between language courses and non-language courses (culture, history, religion, literature, etc.) a new subject code ARABIC has been created. All current SI language courses will change to the ARABIC subject code, retaining all other course details (number, description, etc). This will indicate more clearly and intuitively to students the availability of Arabic language courses, and will provide a more accurate reflection of course content on student transcripts.
- Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures Minor: The requirements for the Minor were changed to SI 121R, SI 131R, two language courses from ARABIC, two additional SI courses, and two electives from a list of courses across the faculties, all of which include significant material about Islam and/or Arab culture. This reduced the number of Islamic Studies core courses that are required. The core course SI 121R Islam in the World remains. The rather similar SI 221R Islam, the West, and the World was removed, as was the capstone course SI 390R Understanding Islam. And the requirement to take one of SI 250R/MEDVL 250R The History of Islamic Civilization from Late Antiquity to 1300 or SI 251R/MEDVL 251R The History of Islamic Civilization from 1300-1800: The Islamic Gunpowder Empires was removed. They were replaced by SI 131R Arab Culture, which includes some consideration of Islam but is not focused on religion as such. Additionally, as with the East Asian Studies Minor, SI introduced a language requirement: any two of our Arabic language courses. These are the strongest courses within SI and the only one consistently taught by permanent faculty. The result of these changes is that students who wish to steer toward an interest in Islam will be able to do so; those who have stronger interests in Middle Eastern history, art, politics, or other areas will also be able to pursue such tracks to the Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures minor. Finally, after consulting with other programs, the program removed some non-SI electives that do not deliver significant instruction on Islamic or Arab cultures (PSYCH 349R Cross-Cultural Psychology; SDS 240R Art and Society ; RS 125 What is religion?) .

Further curriculum review is ongoing: in Fall 2019 there are plans to trim courses that are not being taught, propose cross-listings with appropriate areas, and make further adjustments to the list of acceptable electives. New courses will also be created, as appropriate.

Implementation Plan

Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1. Change of program name	Rebranding as Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures	Chair of CLS	Accomplished – effective September 2020
2. Administrative integration into an existing Renison academic unit	Merger with Culture and Language Studies Department	Chair of CLS	Accomplished – effective May 1, 2019
3. Hiring full-time Director and Faculty	There is no plan to hire a full-time Director for the program. Hiring of tenure track Assistant Professor in Arabic language and culture Hiring of tenure track Assistant Professor in Islamic Studies	Chair of CLS	Search underway for Arabic position (anticipated state date: July 1, 2020) Search for Islamic Studies position may begin in 2020
4. Review of course offerings (required courses, new courses, possible deletion of/addition to current elective courses)	Initial review, overhaul of plan, and creation of Arabic language course code Further review to reduce unnecessary courses, cross-list certain courses, propose new courses as appropriate	Chair of CLS	First review, plan changes, and creation of ARABIC: accomplished Further review: Fall 2019

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

Date of next program review

2024-2025

Date

Signatures of Approval



July 22, 2020

Chair/Director

Date



July 24, 2020

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

Date

Sheila Ager

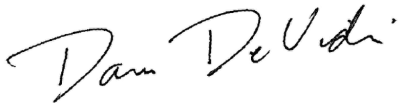
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August 5, 2020

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.



August 6, 2019

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

Date

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

Date

Checklist for SUC/SGRC Reviewer Feedback Quality Assurance Office

Final Assessment Report: Studies in Islam (Minor, Diploma) and Arabic Language (Certificates, Diploma)

Name of Reviewer: Vivian Dayeh

Date: 5/11/2020

Does the Final Assessment Report:

1. Include a credible implementation plan that not only addresses the substantive issues identified from the program review process, but also clearly identifies:
 - The actions that will follow from specific recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for providing resources? **Yes** **No**
 - Priorities for implementation and realistic timelines for initiating and monitoring actions? **Yes** **No**
2. Provide rationales for any recommendations that have not been pursued? **Yes** **No**

General Comments

The Studies in Islam and Arabic Language FAR provided a well-written and clear summary of both programs at Renison University College. The FAR highlights the actions completed or are in process from the recommendations in the review (i.e. it has a credible implementation plan).

Checklist for SUC/SGRC Reviewer Feedback

Quality Assurance Office

Final Assessment Report: Studies in Islam

Name of Reviewer: Richard Wikkerink

Date: 3/18/2020

Does the Final Assessment Report:

1. Include a credible implementation plan that not only addresses the substantive issues identified from the program review process, but also clearly identifies:
 - The actions that will follow from specific recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for providing resources? **Yes** **No**
 - Priorities for implementation and realistic timelines for initiating and monitoring actions? **Yes** **No**
2. Provide rationales for any recommendations that have not been pursued? **Yes** **No**

General Comments

The following are not recommendations in the report, but given that enrolment is mentioned, consideration may be given to the following:

- Wondering about measuring only those students who complete the minor as a way of assessing the impact of the program. Course-level enrolments may be valuable measure of impact
- Enrolment impact of co-op. Will the new Honours Arts co-op program enhance enrolments or has consideration been given to aligning course offerings with some program sequences?