

Two-Year Progress Report

Studies in Islam (Minor, Diploma) and Arabic Language (Diplomas I and II)

January 2022

Background

Last review completed in April 2019.

Final Assessment report submitted October 2019.

Final assessment report approved September 2020.

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, the Associate Vice-President, Academic selected two arm's-length reviewers: 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. 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 four recommendations were provided by the reviewers. The recommendations and progress to completion are stated below.

Enrollment over the past two years

	SI Minor	SI Diploma	AL Diploma I	AL Diploma II
2021-2022	3	0	0	0
2020-2021	1	0	0	0

Progress on Implementation Plan
Recommendations
1. Change of program name

Status: **completed**

Details:

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:

Status: **completed**

Details:

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

Status: **in progress**

Details:

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 tenure-track 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 took place during the Fall 2019 term. A new hire was selected and commenced as the program coordinator on July 1, 2020. However, a second tenure track hire (Islamic Studies) was cancelled due to budget constraints caused by COVID-19 pandemic. We intend to hire a second tenure track faculty member (Islamic Studies) in 2024. .

4. Review of course offerings (required courses, new courses, possible deletion of/addition to current elective courses)

Status: **completed**

Details:

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 UW's 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.
- **Replacement of Arabic Language Certificates with Arabic Language Diplomas I and II:** In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Arabic Language plans (previously a diploma and two language certificates) were replaced with the Arabic Language Diplomas I and II to align with new university guidelines related to certificates and diplomas.
- **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, we introduced a language requirement: any two of our Arabic language courses. These are already the strongest area within SI and the only one with 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, we 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?). We are pleased with these changes as they reflect the core strength of our program and serve students' interests in our courses.

Updated Implementation Plan

The Department Chair and the SIAC Director, in consultation with Renison’s Dean, shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

	Recommendations	Proposed action	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) Follow-up	Timeline for addressing Recommendation
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	Hiring of tenure track assistant professor in Arabic language and culture Hiring of tenure track assistant professor in Islamic Studies	Chair of CLS	Partially accomplished A tenure track assistant professor in Arabic language and culture was hired in 2020. They hold the position of Program Coordinator (see p. 3 of this report for further comment.

				We intend to hire a tenure-track faculty in Islamic Studies in 2024.
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	Accomplished-effective September 2020

Date of next program review: _____ 2024-2025 _____
Date

Signatures of Approval:

Julia Williams

February 4, 2022

Chair/Director

Date

Patricia Barton

August 22, 2022

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only)

Date

Sheila Ager

07/10/2022

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.

Dan DeVidi

June 10, 2022

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

Date

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs

Date

(For graduate and augmented programs)