

Two Year Progress Report History (Tri-University MA and PhD) September 2016

Background:

This two-year report is in response to the Tri-University Program's Self-Study Report, submitted in December of 2014. The original self-study by the program was submitted on September 11, 2013, and the site visit by the external and internal reviewers occurred January 27-29, 2014. This report provides an update on the key recommendations of the review that have happened since January of 2014.

The last self-study, initiated by the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies, at the University of Waterloo selected the external reviewers from a list provided by the Tri-University History program director, who, at the time, was Linda Mahood (who was advised by previous directors Andrew Hunt and David Monod). Each of the partner universities appointed internal reviewers to take part in the study and offer recommendations.

The overall tone of the report submitted by the external reviewers, Dr. Doris Bergen and Dr. Jim Miller, was very positive, praising the MA and PhD programs for their innovations, creativity, and effective use of faculty and resources. "Tri-U program," they noted, "benefits both from committed and enthusiastic graduate instructors and able and energetic students" The reviewers arrived at the verdict that "the Tri-University Graduate Program in History offers degree programs of very good quality, and the organization of the Program, while it could be improved in certain of its details, is on the whole sound. The three institutions can be confident that they are supporting a tri-university program that operates in accordance with practices used at other good institutions and provide an education and training of high quality to its students."

The program review made a series of recommendations, 23 in total, under the following three headings: "Program Objectives," "Program Delivery," and "Logistical Matters."

Most of the recommendations under "Program Objectives" focused on strengthening the communication of the program's goals, rules/regulations, structure, etc., to present and prospective graduate students.

In the case of "Program Delivery," the reviewer's feedback dealt more with ways that the program could enhance the quality of life and general experience for students in the program, to make their time in the Tri-University Program more rewarding.

Finally, on "Logistical Matters," the reviewers primarily raised concerns about the challenges involved in running a joint-program separated not only by geography, but also by different campuses with different institutional regulations, guidelines, cultures, etc.

This report will address key developments made in the Tri-University Program since February of 2014, and discuss recommendations that have not yet been acted upon, but will be in the future.

**Progress on Implementation Plan:
Recommendations**

1. **“Program administrators should make it clear in Program literature and policy statements that a vocational element is central to the nature and purpose of the PhD program.”**

Status: Completed.

Details: This element of the program has been made to program literature, such as the handbook, and on the Website.

2. **“Presentation of the Program’s strengths and successes should be updated and improved for both internal and external purposes. While it may not be necessary at this time to revise the major fields offered, the Tri-U historians. 3 should be prepared to explain those fields and their rationale in more compelling ways.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: This is an ongoing effort on the part of the Tri-University Program director and the graduate chairs of the three departments. The website is being overhauled new to make these issues clear, as are the Doctoral and MA handbooks.

3. **“We recommend that the departmental chairs take seriously the need to help the Tri-U Program Director recruit minor field advisors. We also encourage the Tri-U Director and Graduate Coordinators to explore ways to help faculty develop a larger stake in the success of graduate students, including those for whom they are not the main supervisor.”**

Status: Completed.

Details: This suggestion, in particular, proved a key step forward for the Tri-University Program, and before this report, the lack of input and engagement by the chairs in this area of the program was highly problematic. Since this report was issued, under the direction of Linda Mahood at the University of Guelph, chairs began taking a much more active role in helping to plan doctoral fields and offerings, and participated in recruiting faculty to teach these courses. There are still some issues that may be difficult to resolve, such as the lack of formal credit for teaching doctoral-level fields. Because Fields are often very small (usually only one to four students), and most campuses require a minimum of 6 graduate students in a course to count it as a credit of teaching, giving credit for Major and Minor Fields has proven extremely challenging.

4. **“We recommend that the Program make it clear in the material it provides to applicants to the MA program that all research assignments – MRP or thesis – are to be based on research in primary sources.”**

Status: Completed.

Details: This information is made abundantly clear in several places: The MA and Doctoral handbooks, online, and in print literature, and in verbal consultation with the graduate chairs during orientation and with supervisors.

5. **“The Program Handbook is seriously in need of revision. We recommend the Tri-U Director work with Graduate Coordinators and perhaps TUGSA or other graduate students to update and revise the Handbook as soon as possible.”**

Details: Status: Completed.

Details: Details: Updates are routinely made to the graduate handbook. The handbook itself has always been regarded as an organic document, subject to frequent revisions and change. There have been such updates made since this report was issued. The Graduate Director has decided to make these changes in a more systematic fashion by having specific meetings focused on the handbook – with the three graduate chairs from the different universities present – in the summer, before each school year begins.

6. **“We recommend that one meeting of a student’s advisory committee be held per year, provided that the student is required to submit a progress report in advance of the meeting.”**

Details: Status: Completed.

Details: This is really only applicable to the doctoral program (since the vast majority of our MA students finish the program within one year). The Graduate Studies Office (GSO) and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Linda Warley, have solved this matter internally by asking that the Department conduct annual review meetings with our doctoral students to monitor their progress more closely.

7. **“We recommend that incoming students be provided with a brief introduction to the members of the Tri-U “team” so that they know to whom to turn regarding certain frequently asked questions. There should be some kind of orientation session where new graduate students meet the key people face-to- face.”**

Status: Incomplete.

Details: Each of the three universities in the Tri-University Program holds its own orientation for graduate students, and the Tri-University Director attends all of those. The prospect of a single orientation for all new, incoming Tri-University graduate students is unrealistic because each university handles its orientation differently. But all three campuses have orientation sessions and social events (including one single Tri-University Program fall social event), and all new students are expected to attend their respective orientations, and told so by the graduate chairs at each campus and the Tri-University Program director.

8. **“The departments should monitor the performance of their MA students and, if appropriate, reduce the intake, particularly at the bottom of the pool of applicants.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: All three departments monitor the performance of MA students more carefully thanks to proactive involvement by the graduate chairs, and a reduction of acceptances of applicants with lower averages.

9. **“We recommend that the Program institute examination of all three PhD fields.”**

Status: Incomplete.

Details: This is likely not going to happen. Since the release of the original report, the Tri-University Program has not introduced examinations for all three PhD Fields. This is still a matter being discussed and debated at the three campuses. Change will be slower to come in this area, if at all, because of internal disagreements over what – if anything – should replace the current model of Major Field/Major Research area subjects being tested by the Comprehensive Exams. Such discussions will continue, until either the current model is upheld, or a new model is suggested to replace it. Whether that new model will entail comprehensive exams for all PhD Fields remains to be seen.

10. **“We recommend that the departments revisit the question of allowing MA students to take doctoral field-preparation seminars as seminars that earn credit in the MA in appropriate circumstances. Conversely, PhD students preparing fields in which MA courses are being offered could be encouraged to join in the MA seminar rather than working in isolation.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: The Tri-University Program’s directors have – under certain circumstances – been allowing doctoral students to sit in on MA seminars, provided they are given more extensive, in-depth reading lists to go with those seminars, so they have a larger shared experience of seminar participation. This policy is being pursued even more aggressively next year, in the 2017-2018 academic year.

11. **“Professors should make their syllabi available well in advance of the beginning of the course.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: This is a harder goal to pursue, but the current Tri-University director, Adam Crerar, has made it a priority to seek syllabi in advance of the courses to try to post them online. This action is still very much in progress, however, and will take more time to implement.

12. **“We recommend that the three institutions provide resources to fund the grant for travel between the campuses at a substantially higher level. If necessary, the universities could offer the higher grants on an accountable basis.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: In the past few years, there has been there has been a more systematic funding of travel (example: the Tri-University program pays for gas expenses, encourages car pooling, etc.) between the three campuses. The trip between Guelph and Waterloo, in particular, has been a vexing issue for the Tri-University Program. Past directors of the program have investigated such possibilities as hiring a shuttle bus or investing in a local cab company or driving service to offer students transportation between the two cities. The main obstacle, in this case, has been the exorbitant insurance costs involved in implementing such a service, and the many layers of red tape involved in signing up different students during the various different terms, depending on who takes classes where, which is always difficult to predict in advance. As an alternative, the Tri-University Program has actually increased the funds paid to students to help in travel expenses.

13. “The several departments should investigate ways to smooth out the consultative phase of the admissions procedures.”

Status: In progress.

Details: We have been aided greatly by the fact that now all of the admissions are done online at all three universities, in a way that is much more uniform than it was before this report was issued. This makes the admission process easier because faculty in the three departments have access to each other’s files online. This is done by giving each administrator at the three universities access to our online graduate application systems, and they are able to call up files for faculty in each of the three Departments, which saves a great deal of time.

14. “Communications with applicants should be coordinated so that they each receive only one letter of acceptance or one rejection from the Tri-U Program.”

Status: Completed.

Details: The issue of communications with applicants who received more than one letter of rejection has been solved. This has been done by now relying exclusively on the graduate studies office at each university to send those letters, and no longer having them sent out by the Tri-University’s administrator. Finally, the recommendation that sample syllabi be made available is going to be resolved with the upcoming implementation of the Tri-University Program’s new website. If the syllabi are not placed online, then information about upcoming courses for prospective students will make it abundantly clear that sample syllabi from past MA and Doctoral seminars are available upon request.

15. “We recommend that the departmental chairs take seriously the need to help the Tri-U Program Director recruit minor field advisors. We also encourage the Tri-U Director and Graduate Coordinators to explore ways to help faculty develop a larger stake in the success of graduate students, including those for whom they are not the main supervisor.”

Status: Completed.

Details (PLEASE NOTE: This is a verbatim repeat of recommendation as #3, so the details listed here are identical to the response to that recommendation.) This suggestion, in particular, proved a key step forward for the Tri-University Program, and before this report, the lack of input and engagement by the chairs in this area of the program was highly problematic. Since this report was issued, under the direction of Linda Mahood at the University of Guelph, chairs began taking a much more active role in helping to plan doctoral fields and offerings, and participated in recruiting faculty to teach these courses. There are still some issues that may be difficult to resolve, such as the lack of formal credit for teaching doctoral-level fields. Because Fields are often very small (usually only one to four students), and most campuses require a minimum of 6 graduate students in a course to count it as a credit of teaching, giving credit for Major and Minor Fields has proven extremely challenging.

16. “Professors should make their syllabi available well in advance of the beginning of the course.”

Status: In progress.

Details: (PLEASE NOTE: This is a verbatim repeat of recommendation as #10, so the details listed here are identical to the response to that recommendation.) This is a harder goal to pursue, but the current Tri-University director, Adam Crerar, has made it a priority to seek syllabi in advance

of the courses to try to post them online. This action is still very much in progress, however, and will take more time to implement.

17. **“We recommend that the librarians involved consider the difficulties that students reported concerning access to books, including e-books. We suggest that the administrators at all three institutions monitor how the work of resolving the problems with access to library resources proceeds.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: Improved coordination between the three libraries at the University of Waterloo, the University of Guelph, and Wilfrid Laurier University is an ongoing issue that is complex and not necessarily easy to implement. Each Department works with a liaison librarian. The Tri-University Director has taken steps to improve communication with these librarians by introducing them to one another, and helping to facilitate communication between them. However, each library is an autonomous entity, not controlled by the Tri-University Program, and each has different strengths in terms of holdings. At this stage, the Tri-University Program’s Coordinating Committee – consisting of the director and the three graduate chairs from each campus – will continue to discuss ways of coordinating library book orders, based on the strengths of the three libraries, through their respective liaisons.

18. **“In addition to making their syllabi or at least reading lists available to prospective students well in advance of the beginning of term, field supervisors and course instructors should also work with librarians to ensure that the books are available, and if possible are on reserve in more than one of the Tri-U libraries.”**

Status: In progress.

Details: This is very similar to recommendations 10 and 15. It should be noted that in the Tri-University Program, the MA- and Doctoral-level syllabi and reading lists are almost always one and the same. So the efforts to make syllabi available in advance will also make reading lists available in advance. This is an undertaking to which the current Tri-University Director, Adam Crerar, is dedicated, and he will be endeavouring to make MA and Doctoral syllabi available to graduate students in advance in the 2017-2018 academic year.

19. **“We recommend that the Program make it clear in the material it provides to applicants to the MA program that all research assignments – MRP or thesis – are to be based on research in primary sources.”**

Status: Completed.

Details: (PLEASE NOTE: This is a verbatim repeat of recommendation as #4, so the details listed here are identical to the response to that recommendation.) This information is made abundantly clear in several places: The MA and Doctoral handbooks, online, and in print literature, and in verbal consultation with the graduate chairs during orientation and with supervisors.

20. “We recommend that incoming students be provided with a brief introduction to the members of the Tri-U “team” so that they know to whom to turn regarding certain frequently asked questions. There should be some kind of orientation session where new graduate students meet the key people face-to- face.”

Status: Incomplete.

Details: (PLEASE NOTE: This is a verbatim repeat of recommendation as #7, so the details listed here are identical to the response to that recommendation.) Each of the three universities in the Tri-University Program holds its own orientation for graduate students, and the Tri-University Director attends all of those. The prospect of a single orientation for all new, incoming Tri-University graduate students is unrealistic because each university handles its orientation differently. But all three campuses have orientation sessions and social events (including one single Tri-University Program fall social event), and all new students are expected to attend their respective orientations, and told so by the graduate chairs at each campus and the Tri-University Program director.

Explain any circumstances that have altered the original implementation plan:

n/a

Address any significant developments or initiatives that have arisen since the program review process, or that were not contemplated during the review:

n/a

Date of next program review: _____ **2020** _____
Date

Signatures of Approval:

Chair/Director _____ Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only) _____ Date

Faculty Dean _____ Date

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

Associate Provost, Graduate Studies _____ Date
(For Graduate and augmented programs)