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***SUBMITTED TO OUCQA FOR INFORMATION – Oct 12, 2017***

***APPROVED BY TRENT UNIVERSITY’S SENATE COMMITTEE – Oct 10, 2017***

# CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE (CPRC)

# FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**CULTURAL STUDIES**

*(dated Sept 1, 2017)*

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| **DEGREE PROGRAMS BEING REVIEWED** | **PhD Cultural Studies** |
| **EXTERNAL REVIEWERS** | **Dr. Steven Bailey, York University**  **Dr. Susan Lord, Queen’s University**  **Dr. Timothy Murray, Cornell University** |
| **INTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE** | **Dr. Nadine Changfoot, Political Studies, Trent University** |
| **YEAR OF REVIEW** | **2016-2017** |
| **DATE OF SITE VISIT** | **December 7 & 8, 2016** |
| **DUE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION REPORT BY CUST** | **March 1, 2018** |
| **DATE OF NEXT CYCLICAL REVIEW** | **2024-2025** |
| **DATE PREPARED BY CPRC** | **April 24, 2017** |
| **DATE APPROVED BY PROVOST & VP ACADEMIC** | **September 21, 2017** |
| **SIGNATURE OF PROVOST & VP ACADEMIC** | Provost Muldoon |

The Cultural Studies Department has been a keystone of the arts and humanities at Trent. The emphasis on interdisciplinary inquiry and the ability to balance an individualized program of study with strong cohort building around shared PhD activities in the first two years of study reflects Trent’s historic emphasis on strong pedagogy and student-centered learning. The PhD program is an excellent example of the aspects of intellectual life that have given Trent a prominent and distinctive place within North American graduate education. The Program places emphasis on research and professional development.

**SUMMARY OF PROCESS**

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the PhD Cultural Studies underwent a review. Three arm’s-length external reviewers (Dr. Steven Bailey, York University, Dr. Susan Lord, Queen’s University and Dr. Timothy Murray, Cornell University) and one internal member (Dr. Nadine Changfoot, Trent University) were invited to review the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to the university on December 7th and 8th, 2016.

This Final Assessment Report (FAR), in accordance with Trent University’s Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP), provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the undergraduate degree program. Four evaluation documents are considered in preparing this report: the Program’s Self-Study, the External Reviewers’ Report, the Program Response, and the Decanal Response.

A summary of the review process is as follows: the academic unit(s) completed a self-study which addressed all components of the evaluation criteria as outlined in Trent’s IQAP. Appendices included: Curriculum Vitae; Course Syllabi; Learning Outcomes; Enrolment, Retention and Student Data; Calendar Copy; TUFA Collective Agreement; Student Survey; and information on completed PhDs. Qualified external reviewers were invited to conduct a review of two degree programs which involved a review of all relevant documentation (self-study, appendices, IQAP) in advance of the site visit. A two-day site visit took place where reviewers met with senior administration, faculty and students.

Once the external reviewers’ report was received both the Program and Dean provided responses to the report. The Cyclical Program Review Committee (CPRC) reviewed and assessed the quality of the degree programs based on the four review documents and reports on significant program strengths, opportunities for improvement and enhancement, and the implementation of recommendations.

The Implementation Plan identifies those recommendations selected for implementation, and specifies: proposed follow-up, who is responsible for leading the follow-up, and the specific timeline for addressing the recommendation, if applicable. Academic units, in consultation with the respective Dean(s), will submit an Implementation Report in response to the recommendations identified for follow-up. The Report is due March 1, 2018.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM STRENGTHS**

* The program has a unique structure; first-year collective seminar and comprehensive exams provide the groundwork for cohort integration and simultaneously the development of independent research orientations.
* The structure of the PhD program is highly innovative and distinct from similar offerings in both Canada and the larger North American academic scene. The system of comprehensive exams and projects constitutes an innovative approach to PhD training. The seminar structure in the first two years and the comprehensive exam after year 1 are a creative solution to the need to balance timely completion with the development of foundational knowledge and participation within an academic community.
* The program strikes a balance of shared seminar experiences with individualized projects in preparing students for individual scholarship and community participation simultaneously.
* Reviewers commented on the quality of the full-time faculty and their dedication to the teaching, management, and advising in/of the program. The faculty are leaders in their respective fields, productive in research and scholarship, and in articulating a particular and forceful approach to Cultural Studies.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT**

* Students commented on the need for the enhancement of more formal writing skills.

* Further expansion of professional development opportunities (grant writing, publishing, university pedagogy) would equip students for a very challenging academic job market.
* Increased opportunities for independent teaching by PhD students to assist in developing pedagogical acumen.
* Students expressed some concern with the delivery and structure of seminar courses that varies among faculty members, however, it was noted that the two-year seminar structure seems to be quite effective in providing a strong foundation for dissertation research, given the range and quality of dissertations completed within the program.
* A language learning requirement geared to graduate reading needs should be considered.
* Students expressed a need for ‘a more seriously equipped and maintained multimedia creation space’.
* Letter grades should be provided to be most advantageous to those students seeking external scholarships (especially SSHRC awards) as the adjudication of such awards often places significant weight on grade point average.
* Faculty could be more aggressive in seeking outside research funding.

**COMPLETE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

**That adequate faculty resources be provided with consideration for a Canada Research Chair in Cultural Studies.**

Program Response

The Program strongly advocates for the replacement of the vacated Canada Research Chair position.

Decanal Response

The Dean acknowledged the loss of the previous Canada Research Chair and indicated that the Dean of Graduate Studies will continue to support graduate programs in their request for additional resourcing.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

**That one Director be assigned to oversee both the PhD Cultural Studies and MA Theory, Cultural & Political Studies program.**

Program Response

The Program indicated that the academic administrator should be included in the process of hiring a new director.

Decanal Response

One director will be hired to oversee Theory, Culture, and Politics (TCP) and CUST PhD. The merger and alignment of these two programs should provide some efficiencies and ease the burden on the academic administrative assistant associated with both programs.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

1. **That a School of Media, Art and Cultural Studies be created.**
2. **That the degree program MA in Theory Culture and Politics be renamed to include the word ‘Media’.**
3. **That the MA in Theory, Culture, Politics and Media and the PhD in Cultural Studies be housed under one directorship and be more clearly integrated in terms of mentoring and paths forward.**
4. **That the MA be linked more directly to the Undergraduate program.**
5. **That the MA offer a 1-year option based on coursework on an MRP.**
6. **That a MPhil be granted after 2 years of course and comprehensive requirements.**

Program Response

The program suggested an alternative to the creation of a School might be a Humanities Research Centre. As well, the program did not agree with the suggested name change.

Decanal Response

This recommendation is beyond the scope of the CUST PhD review. The creation of a School would need to be addressed by Humanities and is not relevant to the quality of the PhD program. The recommended name change for TCP would better integrate the TCP MA and CUST PhD programs, and may allow for a more seamless transfer of students out of TCP into the CUST PhD.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

1. **That increased communication take place between the undergraduate chair and graduate director to facilitate teaching, recruitment and experiential learning opportunities.**

**b) That increased communication take place with students to provide information on options, graduating requirements and internship possibilities.**

**c) That website and social media platforms be developed to foster recruitment, outreach and collaboration opportunities.**

**d) That a program handbook be made available on the website. Handbook to be reviewed and revised annually.**

Program Response

The program endorses these recommendations and will improve communication in a number of ways including: the creation of a program handbook and the creation of a pan professional development rubric to address the details of professional formation. The department is currently in the process of implementing a website update and social media platform.

Decanal Response

The Dean will continue to work on building the relationship between undergraduate and graduate programs, to allow for greater communication between the Cultural Studies undergraduate Chair and Cultural Studies PhD Director. This will allow adequate resourcing of graduate programs. Graduate Studies is currently undertaking a revamping of graduate program websites. This initiative will help to broaden the general appeal of the program. The Dean would support the Program’s efforts to update its website and work on social media.

**RECOMMENDATION 5**

**That students be appointed a supervisor upon admission and when a research area changes, so does the supervisor.**

Program Response

The Director is in the ex officio role of supervising all incoming students, except when there are supervisors whose specializations coincide with the fields of the applicant’s topics and/or incoming students are already in communication with such faculty. Supervisors are nominally assigned to each incoming student as in some sense performing the role of mentor and advisor. The orientation of the curriculum makes substantive supervision implausible in the first year in view of the program of studying for comprehensive examinations. Incoming doctoral students have the opportunity to meet and interact with faculty in pursuit of supervisors in the first year. A doctoral student could potentially have three different supervisors over the duration of the PhD.

Decanal Response

All offers that go out for CUST PhD have a supervisor identified. Because of the unique structure of the PhD program, graduate studies will encourage that mentor/advisors other than the Director be assigned as supervisors when students come into the program. It may be that students change supervisors as their projects evolve, however listing the Director as supervisor for many students is not ideal.

**RECOMMENDATION 6**

**That all PhD students be guaranteed at least one Teaching Fellowship in their research area.**

Program Response

A guarantee of the offer of a teaching fellowship should be part of the letter of admission.

Decanal Response

This recommendation is beyond the scope of the CUST PhD quality review and would require compliancy with the union. The graduate and undergraduate departments should discuss providing graduate students with opportunities to teach at the undergraduate level.

**RECOMMENDATION 7**

**That Graduate Students be given grades for coursework to allow for eligibility of external awards.**

Program Response

A more nuanced consideration of the program of courses makes grading in the first two years rather difficult. The program does agree that there are new ways to make students competitive. The comprehensive exams at the end of the first year could be graded but attention would have to be given to a wide diversity of backgrounds, aspirations and cognizant of the ambition of the PhD, which is to create a common ground while recognizing and cultivating distinctness. The program will consult with graduate studies with respect to establishing a protocol for nominal grade.

Decanal Response

The program should examine the curriculum and determine whether there are opportunities to assign grades in some courses. Graduate studies will work with the program to see if there are ways to assign grades to some of the courses that are currently listed as pass/fail.

**RECOMMENDATION 8**

**a) That the value of feminist, anti-racist and Indigenous studies be strengthened in the program.**

**b) That a variety of structured and graded writing assignments be built into first and second years.**

**c) That a Research-Creation component be articulated for this program, within the realistic faculty, space and technical resources available.**

**d) That the 6200 course be reviewed to allow for a more clearly articulated learning path and mandate for the course.**

Program Response

a) The Program supports the recommendation that feminist, anti-racist and Indigenous themes be actively included in the curriculum of the PhD program, and indicated that it is already engaged in such teaching. Such themes are brought forward in the core courses of 6100, as themes in dissertation work, and in the salon seminars. Further communication with Indigenous Studies has been initiated to invite conversation on shared themes such as culture, practices of memory and keeping places.

b) The Program will consider adding graded assignments.

c) The Cultural Studies formation has always been involved in what is presently called “research creation” in two rather different respects: 1) the undergraduate curriculum has been divided between academic and workshop courses that have been connected to each other. For example, Visual Studies has had an academic component in History and Theory, and it has been twined to workshop courses which have concerned the History of Art in material practices (techniques of painting, sculpture, collage). Film and Media Studies have also both academic and workshop courses (students make films and videos). 2) Many of the courses are experimental in their pedagogy. They are not based upon already fixed curricula. In particular, the third project is an invitation for initiatives of research creation that might be in the form of artwork, literary production, or the creation of an online and material publishing company.

d) This course has gone through many versions and the most recent version, taught by the Director has been well received. The course has two purposes: 1) Discourse Formation which results in three documents: Draft of Project 1, Special Field Bibliography, and Dissertation Prospectus; and 2) Matters dealing with professional development. One achievement of the present discourse formation model has been the completion of First Projects prior to the Special Field examinations. Another achievement, perhaps because there are no grades, has been the creation of a community of conversation between the doctoral students about their work. The successful completion of these three components is the accomplishment of the second year.

Decanal Response

The reviewer’s comments are important as they speak to the curriculum. Graduate Studies is currently working on integrating the CUST PhD into the Specialization in Feminist and Gender Studies.

The remaining 3 recommendations touch on issues within the curriculum: the idea of whether there is sufficient writing in the program, whether there is enough emphasis on research creation, and review of the 2nd year course 6200. It would be useful for the program to review these three items and provide a report back on whether they think the comments are valid and whether or not any changes to the curriculum are proposed because of these recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION 9**

**a) That a series of required and formalized professional development seminars be included in the program**

**b) That all PhD students be required to apply for SSHRC as a matter of professional practice.**

Program Response

While there is professional development, in particular in the second-year course, the PhD should create a separate course called The Professional Vocation of Cultural Studies (ie fellowship writing, how to compile a professional CV, overcoming difficulties in communicating with supervisors), which should be offered to all students in the PhD program. This is a very important recommendation because we consider this PhD to be a professional program. A student should be expected to participate and display proficiency in such professional development skills.

Decanal Response

The Dean commented that currently there is an adequate number of courses required of PhD students. An option would be to incorporate material into existing course curriculum. In addition, there are a series of professional workshops available to graduate students put on by the Career Centre, the Centre for Teaching Learning, and Academic Skills. Graduate studies could look to better advertise these to students.

**RECOMMENDATION 10**

**a) That a designated French course, designed for graduate students, be built into the program.**

**b) That web and social media support be used for recruitment and internal communication.**

**c) That support be continued for international students.**

**d) That additional graduate administrative support be provided to assist with communications, web support and recruitment during key periods.**

Program Response

a) Integrating the French requirement into the Cultural Studies PhD can be done in a variety of ways starting with the best option: summer French immersion through the Explorer Program of the Government of Ontario or some equivalent program that would include international students. Short of that, a French course directed to graduate students in the humanities is the next preferred option.

b) A brochure or handbook for the program will be developed based on the information generated by this review and will be added to the updated website page. The handbook will provide students with what to expect from the program structure and requirements.

c) International students continue to make invaluable contributions to the PhD by attracting graduates with outstanding and high credentials who often return home to secure academic positions. Further, it is the policy of the Canadian Government to view postgraduate education as a major conduit for immigration. These two situations of import and export combine to call on the Universities and Government to increase the number of International Fee Waivers and other financial incentives to allow us to recruit more international students.

d) The Program agreed that administrative support should be increased.

Decanal Response

a) The program should explore whether Trent can offer a French course at the graduate level that would satisfy the CUST PhD program. Resourcing and staffing implications must be assessed.

b) The Office of Graduate Studies is currently resourcing a revamping of the graduate studies website and recruitment language for all of the graduate programs. In 2017-2018, graduate studies will develop a new Viewbook that will enhance marketing and recruitment of Trent’s graduate programs.

c) Although International students enhance the scholarship of our domestic students and raise the profile of our graduate programs, it can be difficult to support International Students. International Students pay a higher rate of tuition as they are not funded by the province of Ontario like domestic students. Graduate Studies does make available an International fee waiver to help offset the increased tuition paid by International students. If programs increase their domestic students, there will be additional fee waivers to help support more International students.

d) Resourcing is difficult for graduate programs. The Graduate Studies office tries to maintain all graduate programs with a similar level of administrative support relative to the number of students in the program. CUST PhD has the proportional amount of admin support as other programs. With CUST PhD and TCP becoming more integrated, this may lead to greater efficiencies on the administrative side which could help reduce the workload of the administrator.

**RECOMMENDATION 11**

1. **That faculty research be facilitated and supported.**
2. **That initiatives such as SSHRC Connections Grants for conferences and collaborations be supported.**
3. **That communication to the department be clear and collaborative with respect to budget, rationale for new faculty allocation and physical plant planning**
4. **That additional or alternative space for the program be sought.**

Program Response

Traill College provides a welcome and supportive environment for graduate studies and for the Cultural Studies PhD in particular. Creating collective spaces that would give a finer articulation to Graduate Studies in the Humanities would benefit Cultural Studies in particular. The creation of a Humanities Research Center and Library could meet the research and study needs of all the graduate programs for the Humanities at Trent University based at Traill College.

Dean’s Response

Research related support is available to faculty through the Office of Research. The Dean commented that c) and d) have no direct effect on the quality of the program.

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The applicable Dean, in consultation with the Department Chair/Director of the relevant Academic Unit shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The Reporting Date for submitting a follow-up Implementation Report is indicated below and is the responsibility of the Academic Unit in consultation with the Dean.

**DUE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION REPORT: March 1, 2018**

The Implementation Report should be submitted to the applicable Dean(s) who will then forward the Report to the Office of the Provost.

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| **Recommendation** | **Proposed Follow-Up**  *If no follow-up is recommended, please clearly indicate ‘No follow up report is required’ and provide rationale.*  *If applicable, indicate specific timeline for completion or addressing recommendation* | **Position Responsible for Leading Follow-up** |
| Recommendation 1  That adequate faculty resources be provided with consideration of a Canada Research Chair in Cultural Studies. | No follow-up report is required.  This is a faculty resource issue. |  |
| Recommendation 2  That one Director oversee both the PhD in Cultural Studies and MA in Theory, Cultural & Political Studies.  Recommendation 3 c)  c) That the MA in Theory, Culture, Politics and Media and the PhD in Cultural Studies be housed under one directorship and be more clearly integrated in terms of mentoring and paths forward. | No follow-up report is required.  A Director has been hired to oversee both programs. |  |
| Recommendation 3  a) That a School of Media, Art and Cultural Studies be created.  b) That the degree program MA in Theory Culture and Politics be renamed to include the word ‘Media’.  d) That the MA be linked more directly to the Undergraduate program.  e) That the MA offer a 1-year option based on coursework on an MRP.  f) That a MPhil be granted after 2 years of course and comprehensive requirements. | a) No follow-up report is required. This does not affect the quality of the program.  b), d), & e) – No follow-up report is required. These recommendations are relevant to the MA program, which is not part of this review.  f) The program should explore the option that an MPhil be issued with the successful completion of second year requirements which presuppose the completion of the first year. |  |
| Recommendation 4   1. That increased communication take place between the undergraduate chair and graduate director to facilitate teaching, recruitment and experiential learning opportunities.   b) That increased communication take place with students to provide information on options, graduating requirements and internship possibilities.  c) That website and social media platforms be developed to foster recruitment, outreach and collaboration opportunities.  d) That a program handbook be made available on the website. Handbook to be reviewed and revised annually. | Program to report on a) through d). | Graduate Director in consultation with Dean |
| Recommendation 5  That students be appointed a supervisor upon admission and when a research areas change, so does the supervisor. | In principle, students are appointed a supervisor, which often defaults to the Director. The program should re-examine the policy and determine if faculty other than the Director should be initially identified as a supervisor. | Graduate Director |
| Recommendation 6  That all PhD students be guaranteed at least one Teaching Fellowship in their research area. | The graduate director and undergraduate chair continue to explore opportunities to maximize teaching positions. Discussions with undergraduate programs and CUPE are encouraged to see if this is doable. | Graduate Director and Undergrad Chair |
| CURRICULUM-RELATED  Recommendation 7  That Graduate Students be given grades for coursework to allow for eligibility of external awards.  Recommendation 8 b)  b) That a variety of structured and graded writing assignments be built into first and second years.  Recommendation 8  a) That the value of feminist, anti-racist and Indigenous studies be strengthened in the program.  c) That a Research-Creation component be articulated for this program, within the realistic faculty, space and technical resources available.  d) That the 6200 course be reviewed to allow for a more clearly articulated learning path and mandate for the course.  Recommendation 9  a) That a series of required and formalized professional development seminars be included in the program  b) That all PhD students be required to apply for SSHRC as a matter of professional practice.  Recommendation 10  a) That a designated French course, designed for graduate students, be built into the program. | Rec 7 & Rec 8b) – Program should review the curriculum and see whether there are opportunities to provide some grades for some of the courses.  a) That the program determine if the Specialization in Feminist and Gender Studies would be a good fit for the program.  c) and d) – The program review the writing assignments, research-creation, and the 6200 course to ensure that learning outcomes are being met. Within the available resources, the program should explore how to meet resource needs for Research-Creation.  Rec 9 a) & b) – The program can explore whether these recommendations could be incorporated into the curriculum.  a) The program explore whether or not a French course would be useful for the program and whether Trent has the current capacity to offer a French graduate level course. | Graduate Director |
| Recommendation 10  b) That web and social media support be used for recruitment and internal communication.  d) That additional graduate administrative support be provided to assist with communications, web support and recruitment during key periods.  c) That support be continued for international students. | b) & d): No follow-up report is required. The Graduate Dean reported that additional support had been provided.  c) No follow-up report is required. The University has increased fee waiver support from 0.75 to 1.0. |  |
| Recommendation 11  a) That faculty research be facilitated and supported.  b) That initiatives such as SSHRC Connections Grants for conferences and collaborations be supported.  c) That communication to the department be clear and collaborative with respect to budget, rationale for new faculty allocation and physical plant planning  d) That additional or alternative space for the program be sought. | a) and b) – No follow-up report is required. Faculty support is available through the Office of Research.  c) No follow-up is required. This is not a quality issue.    d) No follow-up is required. This is not considered to be a quality issue. |  |