

**PHILOSOPHY FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT  
PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  
April 2013**

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**The Program Quality Assurance Committee recommends to Senate that the following report on the external review of the degree programs offered by Philosophy be approved.**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On February 13, 2013, the Trent University Program Quality Assurance Committee (PQAC) reviewed and approved the following Department of Philosophy's Final Assessment Report. The Committee was satisfied that the program quality assurance process provided a clear and helpful review of the work of the Trent University Philosophy Department for the time period since its last review in the academic year 2001-2002.

During the time period under review the Department has dealt very effectively with a number of significant trends, including, 1) the reduction in faculty complement while maintaining stable student enrolments; 2) the development of a teaching presence in Oshawa; 3) the establishment of the endowed Kenneth Mark Drain Chair in Ethics; 4) significant curriculum outreach to other academic departments to create and/or strengthen the interdisciplinary opportunities for all Trent students; 5) and, effective the 2012-2013 academic year, a major curriculum review designed to enhance the flexibility and accessibility of their course offerings.

As confirmed by the External Reviewers, the Philosophy Department has a long-standing reputation for honing the critical thinking and analytical skills of their students while also maintaining a solid scholarly research program, thereby identifying the Department as being closely aligned with Trent University's mission as a liberal arts and sciences teaching and research institution. PQAC concurs that the analytical, critical thinking, verbal and writing skills taught by the Philosophy Department provide students with the intellectual flexibility needed in a diverse, dynamic and global workplace. The External Reviewers found that the most pressing concern for the Department was expanding the faculty complement (Recommendations # 1 and #2), a concern that the Program Quality Assurance Committee forwards to the University administration for consideration as part of the ongoing budgeting process.

**INTRODUCTION**

The program was reviewed by Dr. Neil Campbell, Department of Philosophy, Wilfrid Laurier University and Dr. Stephen Bocking, Chair, Environmental and Resource Science/Studies Program, Trent University. A site visit was conducted February 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and the Reviewers interviewed senior administrators, permanent and contractual faculty. They also met with a number of current students.

**ASSESSMENT**

The Reviewers concluded that the Philosophy Department "is of good quality with report" and provided nine recommendations (Section 4). In support of their final assessment of "good quality with report", the Reviewers summarized the strengths of the Department by stating that it "is comprised of dedicated instructors", that the Department is "very collegial and morale seems to be good", that they offer a "vibrant curriculum" that is delivered through small classes with an "emphasis on discussion and written work [which] ensure that degree level expectations are met", and that "the degree of research productivity of the faculty as a whole is good". The "most substantial concern" identified by the Reviewers is "a lack of staffing resources", for both tenured and LTA positions. Secondary concerns identified were the need for more research support and difficulties fulfilling some administrative tasks. They concluded their summary with an assessment of input from current students and graduates who offered "resounding agreement that their Philosophy degree provided them with invaluable analytical, critical thinking, verbal and writing skills". The Reviewers determined that "[t]he Department can be proud of its graduates". In summary, their evaluation of the Philosophy Department as "of good quality with report" affirms the teaching and research calibre of the Department but sets out the "lack of staffing resources" as a concern.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN ORDER OF PRIORITY**

*Please note: Only those recommendations selected for implementation are included in this report. Recommendations that do not require report have not been included.*

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Department receive an additional tenure-track position as soon as possible.**

*Approval required by: Provost & VP Academic  
Resources provided by: Office of the Provost & VP Academic  
Executor: If approved responsibility of Dean (Humanities)  
Timeline for acting on: in progress  
Timeline for monitoring: January 2014*

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Library Budget for physical philosophy holdings be substantially increased.**

*Approval required by: Provost & VP Academic  
Resources provided by: Office of Provost  
Executor: University Librarian  
Timeline for acting on: 2013  
Timeline for monitoring: January 2014*

### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Department be offered more budgetary control over the distribution of its LTAs and CUPE stipends. For example, that the Department be granted flexibility in allocating teaching staff between the Peterborough and Oshawa campuses, to help ensure the most efficient use of teaching resources.**

*Approval required by: Provost & VP Academic  
Resources provided by: Provost & VP Academic  
Executor: Dean (Humanities)  
Timeline for acting on: September 2014  
Timeline for monitoring: January 2014*

### **Recommendation 6**

**It would also be beneficial from a planning standpoint if the Department were to receive a multi-year budget, at least for staffing resources. Until multi-year budget planning is in place, the annual staffing budget should be available earlier in the year.**

*Approval required by: Provost & VP Academic and VP Administration  
Resources provided by: Office of the Provost & VP Academic, Academic Plan-46,47,48  
Executor: Responsibility of Dean (Humanities)  
Timeline for acting on: in progress  
Timeline for monitoring: January 2014*

### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Administration provide additional support for research. In particular, there needs to be improved communication between faculty and the Research Office, more financial support for conference travel, clearer procedures for recovering research expenses and more grant writing workshops. If some of these measures already exist they are not sufficiently publicized.**

*Approval required by: Dean (Humanities), VP Research  
Resources provided by: Office of Research, Academic Plan-Recommendations 55, 56, 57, 59  
Executor: Dean (Humanities)  
Timeline for acting on: regular meetings between the Deans and the Research Office have been initiated  
Timeline for monitoring: January 2014*

#### **Recommendation 9**

**That the Philosophy Department in consultation with the Dean of Humanities should clarify its role at the Oshawa campus, particularly in terms of longer-term prospects for developing a Major option.**

*Approval required by:* Dean (Humanities)  
*Resources provided by:* Academic Plan – Recommendations 33 & 36  
*Executor:* Dean (Humanities), Chair-Philosophy  
*Timeline for acting on:* September 2014  
*Timeline for monitoring:* January 2014

#### **Recommendation 10**

**PQAC recommends that the Philosophy Department offer courses in the summer.**

*Approval required by:* Dean (Humanities)  
*Resources provided by:* Dean (Humanities)  
*Executor:* Chair, Philosophy and Dean (Humanities)  
*Timeline for acting on:* fall 2013 for inclusion in summer 2014 offerings  
*Timeline for monitoring:* January 2014

#### **Recommendation 11**

**PQAC recommends that a system be developed to track the enrolment of non-Philosophy students in Departmental courses to assure that the new course offerings are achieving the desired goal of enhancing the interdisciplinary mix of its students.**

*Approval required by:* Dean (Humanities), Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis (OIPA)  
*Resources provided by:* OIPA  
*Executor:* OIPA  
*Timeline for acting on:* September 2014  
*Timeline for monitoring:* January 2014