

**English Studies and Creative Writing, Undergraduate,  
 English Graduate Programs, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional  
 Studies**

OFFICE OF THE  
 VICE-PROVOST  
 ACADEMIC

**Cyclical Program Review – 2008 to 2015**

**Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan Executive**

**Summary**

**Reported to Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: December 4, 2017**

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**Program Description**

The English Department at was established at the founding of York University in the early 1960s. Students may pursue a full range of undergraduate BA degree options in English (specialized honours through to a minor) as well as an honours or honours/minor in Creative Writing.

Since its inception (MA approved in 1965, PhD in 1968), the Graduate Program in English has focused on the theorized and historicized, critical analysis of literatures, with special emphasis on Canada’s distinctive contribution – namely, Canadian literature as a distinct field and participant in the development of Commonwealth studies, then postcolonial studies, the intersections of which include innovative research in the writings of diasporic and indigenous peoples and communities, theories of imperialism and its resistance, and globalization.

The Graduate Program in English is the only program in Canada to offer a Type II Graduate Diploma in World Literature which admitted its first students in 2014.

	Registration (new intake) 2015/16	Enrolment FTES 2015/16	Degrees Awarded 2016
English (BA)	193	779	Hons 146; 90-credit 76; minor 34
Creative Writing	n/a (upper year options)	34	Hons 16; minor 12
Masters	26	27	22
PhD	11	55	5
Graduate Diploma			1



### **Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:**

Martin Kreiswirth, Professor of English, McGill University  
Margery Fee, Professor of English, University of British Columbia  
Marlene Shore, Professor of History, York University

### **Documentation Provided to the External Reviewers**

Prior to the site visit, the external reviewers are provided with the following:

- Dean's/Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Program Self-Study Brief, which includes program structure, curriculum and learning outcomes, program reflection, enrolment and retention data, resources, student input and quality enhancement opportunities
- Faculty CVs
- University, Faculty and Program planning documents

### **Cyclical Program Review Process**

The EN Unit (undergraduate department and graduate program) has approached "self-study" as a continual process since 2007-08, when the old Faculty of Arts English Department, the Atkinson Faculty English Department, and the Creative Writing Program in the Humanities Division began the process of merging to form a new EN Unit, housed in the new Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies.

In 2015 (graduate) and 2016 (undergraduate), in preparation for the Quality Assurance Coordinated Program Review, an extensive questionnaire was sent to all students in the Unit comprised of institutionally set questions allowing for program comparison data analysis, as well as a series of EN unit specific questions.

The methods used for the EN unit self-study comprised generation and analysis of numerical and qualitative responses to several crucial Faculty-wide benchmarks as well as additional unit-specific questions guided by the quality assurance, coordinated program review (CPR) template, including responses to the unit's previous undergraduate program review, and others generated by the unit's, the Faculty's, and the University's recent history. Two "town hall" meetings were held for undergraduate English and Creative Writing, and graduate English students respectively.

**Site Visit:** November 8, 2017

During the site visit the reviewers met with the Vice-Provost Academic, Alice Pitt, J.J. McMurtry, Associate Dean Programs, Sandra Whitworth, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research, the Chair of the Department, the Coordinator of the creative Writing Program and representatives from the University libraries, Adam Taves and Lisa Sloniowski. The reviewers held a meeting with all levels of undergraduate students, faculty members from both of the undergraduate programs and the graduate program, the administrative assistant and two groups of students, including majors and non-majors.

**Outcome:**

The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations. Progress on the recommendations will be included in the Follow-up Report due June 2019. The next CPR will begin in the Fall of 2023.

**Strengths**

The following statement, taken from the Undergraduate self-study document, describes the options for students, “To promote breadth and depth of knowledge appropriate to each major program in the discipline, the Department is able to provide a great variety of courses necessary for robust English literary study, including courses in historical periods from medieval to contemporary, in the literature of several nations (Canadian and post-colonial as well as English and American); in the various literary genres such as poetry, fiction, drama, non-fictional prose; and in criticism and in literary theory.”

The Graduate program self-study provides the following insight, “What enables any responsible engagement of literary study in an era of globalization is deep scholarship in national, generic, stylistic, and thematic traditions. Fields offered by the Graduate Program, therefore, are supported by specialized professorial training, research and publication, courses offered, directed readings supervised, and doctoral major field comprehensive examinations in”.... fields grouped into three types: nation, genre and focus.

## **Reviewer Recommendations and Dean's Implementation Plan**

For both the undergraduate and graduate programs, the Reviewers Recommendations fall generally into two categories: curriculum and the program renewal. The Dean's Implementation Plan states, "I would like to compliment the reviewers and program for a thorough and considered report. While there are some issues of difference and emphasis, the program has presented itself in a clear and reflective manner."

Noting the recommendations from the reviewers regarding resources and curriculum, the Dean's Implementation Plan offers the following observation, "It seems that ...there is a need for the Department of English to focus on its curriculum as a means of providing the Department with new intellectual life and direction. With this direction, issues of resourcing, complexity of degree, and student satisfaction could be addressed." In other words, once the program review and any potential revision to the program are completed, a hiring plan can be formulated.

Similarly, there are recommendations related to the graduate program that relate to resource renewal and curriculum. The Dean's Implementation Plan suggests that the program, "look at their fields of expertise at the graduate level to see what might be done to position the program for the future and perhaps look to areas of expertise that may appeal to both students and faculty going forward."

Action	First Responsibility	Final Responsibility	Timeline
Undertake a thorough review of the undergraduate curriculum focused on (1) majors, (2) "service" courses, and (3) online and EE	English Department	English Department with Associate Dean Programs and the Curriculum Manager of LA&PS	April 2018
Review class size at various year levels	English Department	English Department with Associate Dean Faculty Affairs through a workload document submission	April 2018
Review relationship with the Professional Writing Program to identify opportunities and clarify relationship	English and Professional Writing Department	Meeting with Associate Dean Programs to discuss actionable items	April 2018
Develop a recruitment strategy for Graduate English or review program structure	Graduate Program in English	Meeting with Associate Dean Graduate and Research to discuss opportunities	June 2018
Review areas of expertise in Graduate teaching and research	Graduate Program in English	Graduate Program in English in consultation with Associate Dean Graduate and Research	June 2018

A report on the progress of these initiatives will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due in June 2019.

Alice J. Pitt  
Vice-Provost Academic  
York University