

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Classics B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

Date of Review: March 22 - 24, 2021

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by the **Classics Department**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

The Classics Department submitted a self-study in January 31 2021 to the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each member in the program.

Two arm's length external reviewers, both from Ontario and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Vice-Provosts. The review team reviewed the self-study and supporting documentation and then conducted a virtual site visit on March 22 - 24 2021. The visit included meetings with the Provost, Vice-Provosts, Dean, Associate Dean and faculty and students and members of the pertinent administrative units.

The Chair of the Classics Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (June 2021). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

Strengths

In their report (April 2021), the Review team noted that the department has demonstrated itself to be ahead of the curve in embracing new modes of delivery and online technology long before the onset of the pandemic and has introduced innovative initiatives in the teaching of both undergraduate and graduate students.

The reviewers highlighted the following strengths of the programs:

Highlighted strengths of the Classics Department are a spirit of teamwork and dedication to make the most of the available resources, “collegial volunteerism and entrepreneurial innovation”, continued development of online courses, international and experiential learning opportunities for both grad and undergrad students, new collaborative graduate programs with the University of Rome “La Sapienza,” and “an innovative new exam structure designed to increase the proportion of PhD students who complete the program on time without sacrificing the rigor of the exams.”

Areas for Improvement

The reviewers note that “we would like to stress that there is no area in which there is an urgent need for improvement or enhancement.” They do point out the challenge presented by imminent retirements and especially the impact this has on the proportion of undergraduate courses taught by permanent faculty and the threat this poses to our ability to offer a comprehensive range of supervision to graduate students.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations with the Department’s and Dean’s Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1. The department should work closely with the administration to ensure the maintenance of teaching and supervisory capacity in Ancient History.	The Chair will discuss this with the Dean.	Chair	July 2022
2. The reviewers encourage the administration to work closely with the Classics unit to address the	Since the report was made, one retirement has already happened. The Chair will work with the Dean to address the impact of	Chair	July 2022

implications for the program from the two impending retirements.	this and to plan for future retirements.		
3. The department should work with the administrative staff to compose a handbook outlining the responsibilities of the position of Administrative Assistant.	The Chair will inquire to find out the responsible parties here, i.e. whether the determination of the responsibilities of the Admin Asst. reside with the department or in the administrative sphere, whether such a guide might exist elsewhere, and who should compile one.	Chair	September 2021
4. The department should collect data over the next several years to assess the success of the new Greek and Latin comprehensive exam structure. While the first year of the new structure was highly successful, the small number of students in any one year makes it difficult to judge the success of the change after just one year.	The Department will collect this data and evaluate the success of the changes to the comp exam structure over the span of 3 years.	Graduate Advisor	May 2024
5. The department should look into the possibility of installing master copies with site licenses of specialized software programs onto a shared computer to	Provision of a dedicated computer room is probably not possible due to cost, but the department will work with individual students to ensure that their computer needs are met.	Graduate Supervisors, Grad Advisor	ongoing

which the graduate students could have evening and weekend access.			
6. If possible, the department should consider setting aside a space dedicated to graduate students.	The department provides all graduate students with an individual desk in a shared office; we will try to maintain this, but are unlikely able to expand the space provided to grad students beyond this.	Chair, Grad Advisor	ongoing
7. The review team suggests that the department consider instituting a series of pro-seminars for the graduate students to provide concrete advice on serving as a TA, teaching, publication, alternative academic or non-academic careers, etc.	This was the one recommendation the Department was surprised by, as we do offer an ongoing series of proseminars for the graduate students on similar topics (and in fact, two of these were led by grad students themselves in the past year). We will consult to see whether we can expand our offerings.	Grad Advisor	ongoing
8. The department should make an effort to collect data about the post-graduation employment of alumni of the PhD program.	The Department will make every effort to keep in touch with our graduates although it was noted that this is sometimes difficult, especially for those students who leave the academic field.	Grad supervisors, Grad Advisor	Ongoing
9. The review team suggests that the university administration support the department in its	The recommendation is aimed at the “university administration”. We are keen to be supported in our	“university administration”, Chair	Ongoing

international initiatives in Italy, as they could potentially be expanded to offer opportunities to the university community beyond the Classics department.	international endeavours.		
10. The department should consult with the Recruitment Coordinator and the Careers Officer to develop recruitment strategies and the development of careers-oriented professional skills for the undergraduate Classics programs.	These are newly created offices. We will consult with them on how to improve our recruitment and how better to provide career-oriented skills for our graduates.	Chair or designate	ongoing

Dean’s Response, Faculty of Humanities:

The review team was correct to praise McMaster’s Classics department. The reviewers’ report notes in several places that the department has shown consistent creativity in its determination to serve the needs of its program students, those interested in Classics electives, its graduate students, and the faculty members’ research agendas. According to the reviewers, the department’s innovations may serve as models to Classics departments elsewhere. Some of these strategies include the creation of a high-enrolment elective course (Medical Terminology); the pre-pandemic development of online courses; the establishment of experiential education opportunities via researchers’ archaeological digs and the international partnership with La Sapienza in Rome; the generation of revenue through Radix publishing that supports undergrad instruction in Classics; and the curricular reforms that seek to enable undergrad and graduate students to fulfill the demands of a rigorous Classics education, even if they got a late start learning Latin and Greek. I want to thank my colleagues in the department for all their efforts. Their willingness and ability to find solutions to the challenges they face should be commended – and it should not be taken for granted.

As the review and departmental response note, one retirement for July 2022 has been announced and a second will likely follow in a few years. As everyone in the Faculty knows, I cannot promise that all retirements will be replaced, but I am aware that the department is already very lean. We will work on a solution together. I would recommend that the idea of a handbook for administrative assistants and it makes sense to have a Faculty-wide template as a first step.

With respect to the specialized software for graduate students, the chair should speak with John Bell about equipment. Unfortunately, we don't have the resources to establish graduate lounges for all our programs at this time. As the department response notes, however, the Faculty has been and will continue to invest in new supports around alumni development and careers education for our undergrad students. I encourage the department to contribute to this work by maintaining and deepening all connections they have to past students and by encouraging undergrads to attend the workshops put on by our new Humanities careers manager. Our Associate Dean Grad Studies is also looking for new ways to connect the Faculty's graduate students with information on non-academic careers. Some of these efforts have been sidelined in 2020-21, but we look forward to more events in the future.

I believe the institution's administrators at the Faculty and University levels have been supportive of the new La Sapienza agreements, but if problems arise, the department chair and grad chair should be sure to reach out. We all want to see the new partnership enhance our current students' experiences and help the department recruit students in the years to come. To that end I would recommend that the chair connect with our communication manager to prepare some promotional stories for the newsletter and/or testimonials for the website featuring students who participate in the exchange.

In sum, there are no substantial areas of improvement recommended by the reviewers. The main challenge identified will be faculty renewal, and my colleagues in Classics will also want to track how their new language comprehensive exam structure works out. Early results look promising, but they will need to review results over the next three to five years.

Lastly, I would suggest that the department continue to think of ways to promote the undergraduate program in Classics. I recognize that in the current climate doing so can be a challenge, and as I've commented, the department has done well to grow its electives instead. But I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to encourage the department to continue to pursue creatively new opportunities to promote the undergraduate major in Classics.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation:

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.