

**External Review**

**Department of Philosophy and Classics**  
University of Regina

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Dr. James O. Young

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## **Process**

On April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Dr. Kathryn Norlock (Trent University) and Dr. James Young (University of Victoria) conducted a review of the Department of Philosophy and Classics at the University of Regina.

Prior to arriving at the University of Regina the reviewers were provided with a copy of the Department's self study. In addition to this document, the External Reviewers studied the following documents:

- PHIL course populations 2004-2015
- University of Regina Terms of Reference for External Reviews
- BAC Unit Enrolments Five Year History
- Luther College briefing documents
- Information on credit hours per FTE, long term
- Teaching capacity vs. needs overview

The visit to the University of Regina began with a meeting with the University Provost. The Reviewers subsequently met with:

- Dr. Thomas Bredohl, Acting Dean of Arts
- Dr. David Elliott, Head, Department of Philosophy and Classics
- Dr. Lee Ward, Director, Social and Political Thought Program
- Mr. Lamont Stradeski, Director, Executive Reporting Services
- Dr. Nilgun Onder, Acting Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Studies)
- Dr. Anna Mudde and Dr. Ann Ward
- Dr. Joseph Piwowar, Associate Dean (Undergraduate)
- Dr. Eldon Soifer, Dr. Piercey, and Dr. Ryan Doran
- Dr. David Meban
- Dr. Roger Petry and Dr. Franzvolker Greifenhagen (Luther College)
- Philosophy Graduate Students
- Philosophy Undergraduate Students

A final meeting was held with Dr. David Malloy and Dr. Thomas Bredohl.

The Review was capably facilitated by Dr. Kathleen McNutt.

### **Overview of the Department of Philosophy and Classics**

The Department of Philosophy in our judgement is doing a very good job under difficult circumstances.

The members of the Department, and their colleagues in the Faculty of Arts unanimously agree that the Department is collegial and, despite a complex administrative environment, highly cooperative. The collegiality exists both within the Department and in its commitment to the University and its constituent colleges. The Department's commitment to the bi-weekly reading groups and its philosophy café are particularly commendable.

The Department is performing very well in providing undergraduate education, both to philosophy students and to students studying other fields. Students, both graduate and undergraduate, spoke enthusiastically of the instruction and mentoring that they received.

The Department's enrolments are good, particularly by comparison with other departments in the Faculty of Arts.

The Department's engagement with graduate education is limited, and primarily focused on the Social and Political Theory Program. The available evidence indicates that this has been a successful program.

The Department has a good record of research achievement. Information provided by Dr. David Malloy indicates that the University of Regina fares well by comparison with comparable institutions when the impact of research is measured. Some members of the Department have distinguished records of research achievement and would be a credit to research-intensive universities.

Although the Department has experienced good success in the areas of teaching, research and service, the repeated cuts to the faculty complement have had an adverse effect on morale.

The Department is seriously understaffed for an institution the size and ambitions of the University of Regina. The University proper, as opposed to the colleges, seems to have neglected the study of philosophy and classics, despite good enrolments in both fields.

The evidence available to us strongly suggests that Philosophy is just barely able to offer its degree programs. We have heard that students experience difficulty completing their degrees in a timely manner because required courses are not offered more frequently.

Below we will propose ways in which the Philosophy part of the Department can increase already strong enrolments. We believe that the Department already has

a strong case for an additional appointment. If enrolments increase, then an additional appointment in Philosophy should certainly be made.

### **Research and Scholarly Activity, and resources provided**

Members of the faculty seem to have active research programs, and Dr. David Malloy (Vice President-Research) reports measurements of their citation impact apparently placing them in the middle of the pack when compared to faculty at peer institutions. If the quantity of research is not high across the board, administrators and faculty agreed that the quality of research is strong. Faculty members reportedly do not participate in application to SSHRC grants and initiatives; doing so would be beneficial to the department and especially to graduate students.

In light of the statement in the university's Terms of Reference for reviews, that "As members of a research institution, our faculty and students are expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their particular field of study," reviewers were surprised to learn that the library of the University of Regina does not subscribe to PhilPapers, which is, and has been for some years, the single most widely used research resource in philosophy. PhilPapers indexes three times the number of books and articles that Philosopher's Index provides, and much more fulltext and archived content (see [philpapers.org/subscriptions/comparison.html](http://philpapers.org/subscriptions/comparison.html)). It is not clear to us how faculty and students can be expected to contribute to advancement of knowledge in philosophy when they are not provided access to the most common source for that knowledge. The absence of this resource is concerning, since it excludes faculty members and students from literature that most philosophers are accessing with ease. Reductions may be necessary, but any adjustment to library subscriptions must involve determining a path to making subscription to PhilPapers a reality.

We understand that cuts to library subscriptions including Cambridge journals have been part of a review of library resources, and students report noticing the limitations of the physical collection available to them.

Dr. David Malloy (Vice President-Research) reports that research resources include start-up funds for new faculty, and for all members of the Faculty of Arts, \$1,400 per year for staff travel and \$1,900 per year for Professional Development. Early career researchers may also apply to the President's Fund, for up to \$5,000 as a seed. In addition, at the University of Regina annually a Dean's research award is available to faculty members in small amounts on a competitive basis to enable them to develop research projects, in amounts to a maximum of \$3,500 dollars. These seem to be reasonably good amounts to

reviewers, in keeping with other Canadian institutions. Some members of faculty in Philosophy continue to perceive that less is available for travel and research than this; therefore, a memo to all unit members by the VP-Research may be helpful to scholars' planning efforts.

Scholarly activity available to the Classics professor seems unfortunately reduced by the absence of funding for guest speakers; it was his memory that Classics has not had a guest speaker in at least 12 years. University of Regina Philosophy professors likewise report that their visiting speaker budget was apparently phased out, and note that the University's Community Research Unit may be a help in pursuing future possibilities for guest speakers.

We recommend that the University Library subscribe to PhilPapers and that library acquisitions should be increased in consultation with faculty members.

We recommend that a fund be established for bringing in visiting speakers and that some of these speakers be classicists.

We recommend that the Dean provide an updated summary to all unit members of the available funding for research and research-related travel.

We recommend that members of the Department be more active than they have been in seeking funding from SSHRC and other granting agencies.

### **Undergraduate studies**

In recent years, the Department has made a concerted effort to maintain and increase enrolment. Due to a fall in teaching capacity, these efforts have been unable to prevent a fall in enrolment, but they have ensured a healthy student to teacher ratio in both philosophy and classics courses. At the undergraduate level Philosophy currently teaches 133.2 credit hours per actual FTE and Classics teaches 255.6 credit hours per actual FTE. These numbers comfortably exceed the Faculty of Arts average of 95.9. Although there has been a dip in enrolment in the past five years, this is attributable to a decline in faculty resources.

Student to teacher ratios remain highly favourable, as is apparent when we look at the data on teaching capacity vs. needs overview. This shows a deficit teaching capacity. A variety of numbers were provided to the external reviewers and these numbers do not always agree. (Likely they were from different years.) It appears, however, that there is a deficit in the range of 10 courses (or about two faculty members) per year.

Of course, there are lies, damn lies, and statistics. The Department states that the class ceiling for 100 level courses is 55 (assuming that pedagogical standards are to be met). This number strikes us as low. The number could be as high as 120 for logic and critical thinking courses, assuming that appropriate marking assistance is available. Averaging logic and non-logic courses would result in a number higher than 55. On the other hand, a ceiling of 24 is far too high for 400 level courses. 15 would be more appropriate. Even adjusting these numbers will, however, result in a teaching capacity deficit for the Department.

We believe that further opportunities for increasing enrolment exist and should be pursued.

Opportunities to offer ethics and logic to students in high-enrolling programs seem promising, and waiting to be pursued. Administrators and faculty members expressed interest in pursuing connections with programs including Nursing, Engineering, and Kinesiology and Health Studies (KHS). The growth in Nursing, Engineering, and KHS are significant, according to the documentation that the university helpfully provided us. Ethics courses to students in these areas may enjoy healthy enrolments, and faculty in Philosophy agree that they have strong teaching skills and much to offer students in other majors. The department faculty's many strengths include a deep bench in ethics, so their capacities for course offerings seem to suit the possible growth of ethics courses for students in the professional programs.

We recommend that the Department approach academic leaders in Nursing, Engineering and KHS with a view to developing courses that serve the needs of students in these units.

We further recommend to the University administration that all courses in ethics and logic/critical thinking be taught by professors with specialised training in these areas.

In philosophy and classics programs around the world, the ratio of majors to faculty members is lower than it is in other programs. This reflects the fact that these programs have a larger than normal service component. If our recommendations are followed, we anticipate a rise in enrolment without necessarily a concomitant rise in the number of majors. We see no reason why this should worry the University administration.

We recommend that the enrolment performance of the Department should be measured by total undergraduate enrolment, not by the number of majors.

Strengths of the undergraduate curriculum include the recent launch of the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics major program (PPE). Administrators, faculty, and students seem to recognize opportunities to recruit students to PPE and increase its enrolments. The innovation of this program is excellent and merits advertisement and support.

We recommend that the PPE should be advertised nationally and internationally as a major innovation, and support for this program should be enhanced in consultation with participating faculty, including events that contribute to advertising and recruitment.

With the recent hire of a faculty member, the department is once again able to offer its Symbolic Logic course (PHIL 352), a fundamental offering for philosophy major degree programs at any university. This is a significant improvement in the well-being of students in the department, who noted that for a period of a year or two, this course was not on offer. Faculty members observed that the introductory Critical Thinking course (PHIL 150) was occasionally a course that included introductory symbolic logic, at the instructor's discretion. Now that the department has regained its capacity to offer Symbolic Logic, however, it seems an opportune time to develop Critical Thinking as a course more squarely located in Informal Logic, and to renumber Symbolic Logic as a second-year course to indicate that it is the next step in a sequential learning experience (e.g., "PHIL 250"). Some universities find that when more broadly advertised or cross-listed, Symbolic Logic is a course of interest to Computer Science, Engineering, and Math majors. The faculty members in this unit have opportunities to offer a logic course to Engineering majors, in particular.

We recommend that PHIL 150 be re-designed as a standard informal logic/critical thinking course and that PHIL 352 be renumbered as a course at the 100 or 200 level.

The number of courses currently described in the Calendar seems unusually high, and exceeds the possibilities for regular occurrence of all courses. It is unclear that a standard course rotation plan exists for ensuring that students know what is on offer and when. Some students and faculty acknowledged occasional obstacles to students' timely completion of the degree when needed courses were not on offer or clearly going to be offered. Students, in particular, expressed a strong preference for a website with a clear Course Rotation schedule and unambiguous indication as to how often particular courses are offered (per semester, annually, every other year, or occasionally). Undergraduate students agreed that information each semester including news of offerings in the coming semester, but beyond that, students did not have obvious and centralized information as to "an overarching plan" online.

Department faculty agreed that course rotations have not been recently updated; devising a clear document that shows the frequency of course offerings will require some robust planning on the part of faculty members, and some decluttering of the course listings, which currently seems to include many unusually specific upper-level courses.

We recommend that the Department review curriculum with a view to establishing a rotation of courses that will serve the needs of students and also with a view to eliminating courses that cannot be offered given the current faculty complement.

### **Faculty complement**

The faculty complement consists of collegial and committed members who work well together. The complement currently consists of 6.5 faculty appointments in Philosophy total and 1 in Classics, comprising 3 Philosophers at University of Regina (Drs. Soifer, Elliott, and Doran), 2.5 Philosophers at Campion College (Drs. Piercey, Mudde, and Ward), one Classicist (Dr. Meban), and one philosopher at Luther College (Dr. Petry). As well, Philosophical courses have been offered to Kinesiology and Health Studies (KHS) students by Dr. David Malloy (Vice President-Research).

The number of faculty available to teach students at a university of this size is, as noted in the previous section, scarcely adequate to the task, and certainly any further reduction would lead directly to inability to offer the major or even supply non-majors the high enrolment introductory classes currently provided. Uncertainty about whether future retirements will be replaced is damaging Department morale.

Regarding diversity, the faculty complement includes one woman as a full member of the Campion College philosophy faculty (Dr. Anna Mudde) and one woman in a half-position jointly with Campion College philosophy and Department of Politics and International Studies (Dr. Ann Ward); a female complement of 23% is just a bit below the numbers of women in Philosophy in Canada (27% of professors of philosophy, according to the Canadian Philosophical Association). Faculty members recognize that ethnic minorities are absent from their current membership; this is reflective of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the profession as a whole, a lamentable fact in philosophy, and all seem hopeful of changing that state of affairs in the future.

We believe that the Department has a strong case for an additional member. The consensus opinion within the philosophical profession is that the minimum

number of faculty members required to offer a philosophy undergraduate degree at a major Canadian university is about eight or nine. By this standard, and given good enrolments in philosophy, there is already a case for an additional appointment in philosophy. In the unfortunate event of a faculty member suffering from serious illness or a debilitating accident, we are sceptical about the ability of the Department to continue to offer its programs. We believe that there is room for growth in enrolment, as is indicated elsewhere in this report.

We are aware of the need for additional resources for the classics side of the Department. Impressive numbers of students are interested in classics courses. We recognise, however, that in the short run the hiring of additional classicists will be difficult. In the long term, however, if student demand remains high, the University ought to consider more resources for classical studies. In our view, it is unfair that all of the positions in classics be provided by Champion College. This in effect makes the University a free rider when it comes to classical education.

The Department is already sensitive to the issue of diversity, but is reminded that every hiring is an opportunity to diversify the University's faculty.

We recommend that develop strategies for the recruitment of visible minorities or members of equity-seeking groups.

We recommend that the senior administration assure the Department that the number of philosophers will not fall below the current complement of 6.5 and the number of classicists will not fall below 2.0 so long as present enrolments are maintained.

We recommend the appointment of a philosopher who is qualified to contribute to the teaching of ethics and/or logic courses designed for nursing, engineering, and computer science students. Given the small size of the Department, any new appointment ought to have broad philosophical interests that will complement the specialisations of current members. The Department may wish to give special consideration to hiring a philosopher who has expertise in early modern philosophy, epistemology and metaphysics, or aesthetics.

### **Graduate studies**

The Department has a limited involvement in graduate studies. The classics part of the Department seems to have no involvement and, given the small number of faculty members in this area, it is difficult to see how it could offer any graduate courses.

The current arrangement for MA studies in Philosophy by special arrangement seems appropriate. By leaving this opportunity open, it is possible for the Department to serve the needs of students who, for personal reasons, cannot go elsewhere for a master's in philosophy.

The Department's major role in graduate studies is through the Social and Political Theory (SOPT) Program. We are concerned about the long term viability of this program due to the fact that current funding for students (through the associated Canada Research Chair) is about to dry up. The program is, however, a success and is drawing students from across Canada.

We recommend that a stable source of funding be identified for students entering the SOPT program.

### **Miscellaneous recommendations**

At one time the Department had a small amount of money for bringing in guest lecturers. This money is no longer available. The absence of a small fund for guest speakers is detrimental to Departmental morale. We were told that even when funds were available, no classicists were ever among the guest lecturers brought to Regina.

We recommend that a small amount of money, perhaps \$1000, be allocated for bringing in guest lecturers.

We recognise that the bulk of the Department is made up philosophers. Nevertheless, guest lecturers ought at least occasionally to be of interest to classicists. A lecturer on Horace or on Hellenistic philosophy may be of interest to some of the Department's philosophers as well as to one or the other of the classicists.

The Department website, a primary source of information to students, is inadequate. Ideally, this page would clearly supply "Requirements for Majors and Minors in Philosophy." (Currently, clicking on the majors bumps one to the Registrar's page.)

We recommend updating the department website, including updating of the page stating that "the Department offers six undergraduate programs," to reflect more accurate information regarding what major and minor options exist.

Dr. David Malloy (Vice President-Research) has expertise in ethics that makes him suitable for a courtesy appointment in Philosophy.

We recommend that Dr. Malloy be offered a courtesy appointment in Philosophy.

The University of Regina has only recently resumed the practice of external reviews, and did not provide the Reviewers with Terms of Reference for reviewing Philosophy and Classics, per Academic Review policy: "Specifically, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and CCAM will develop terms of reference for the review team...Provost and Vice-President (Academic) working with CCAM, the Dean of the faculty and the unit under review will identify specific issues to be addressed by the review team." We therefore relied on the University's template for our Terms of Reference.

We recommend that the University develop more comprehensive terms of reference for external reviews of its academic units.