

3 February 2017

Dr Eldon Soifer, Head
Department of Philosophy and Classics
University of Regina

Dear Eldon,

Per the Academic Unit Review Policy, available at <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-OPS-130-005.html>, I am pleased to provide a response to the external reviewers' April 2016 report following last year's Academic Unit Review (AUR) of the Department of Philosophy and Classics. My response follows that of CCAM dated 25 January 2017, and the Department's undated response posted to the AUR webpage.

First, I wish to thank the members of the Department of Philosophy and Classics, including our colleagues at the federated colleges, for undertaking the work of preparing the self-study, and hosting the review team. I also want to thank the external reviewers, Dr Kathryn Norlock of Trent University and Dr James Young of the University of Victoria. Their collegial work, and the time they took from their own teaching and research to visit our campus, are much appreciated. I wish also to thank Dr Kathleen McNutt of the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School, for assisting the external reviewers with their work during the site visit. The external review report reflects the views of Drs Norlock and Young.

I concur with many aspects of the report:

- its commendation of the Department's collaborative work with colleagues at the federated colleges in providing courses to which students respond enthusiastically (page 3)
- the pursuit of further opportunities for increased enrolments (6)
- suggestions about class ceilings for 100-level offerings (6)
- expansion of offerings for students in professional programs (6)
- the national advertisement and indeed celebration of the PPE program (7)
- offering a logic course to our much-expanded body of Engineering students (7)
- a review of the curriculum including, potentially, a reduction in the number of courses on the books, and the establishment of a course rotation (7-8), and
- the offering of a courtesy appointment to Dr Malloy (10; already accomplished).

Under the headings that follow, I will explore more fully several of the issues raised in the report, or absent from it.

Faculty complement (pp. 8-9)

At a recent Executive of Council meeting, President Timmons observed AURs that recommend fewer rather than more resources are very rare. This external review supports her observation.

Additionally, despite efforts to provide external reviewers with institution-wide data (please see each AUR webpage for such data), AURs tend to focus largely or exclusively on the unit under review, viewing it mostly through a disciplinary lens. While this is understandable, the recommendations flowing from such AURs lack crucial institutional context, and need to be considered in that light.

The AUR report for PHIL/CLAS notes that the University of Regina “system” (that is, the University and its federated colleges) currently has a complement of 6.5 philosophers and 1 classicist, with occasional additional offerings outside PHIL/CLAS in areas such as Kinesiology (in particular, Dr Malloy’s ongoing contributions in teaching and published research to issues of ethics).

It speaks to a “strong case for an additional member” (8). On several occasions, the Department itself has also raised the separate issue of the unreplaced retirement in Classics some years ago.

There is no question that the total faculty complement in PHIL/CLAS at the University proper has contracted as retiring colleagues were not replaced. Given the pattern of operating funding from government since 2011, however, this situation is unlikely to change as the University works to keep campus-wide enrolments at least stable, meet very high student demand in some areas of study, and observe its contractual obligations to faculty, an increasing number of whom have chosen to work beyond the normal retirement age. This brings added financial challenges to the University and indeed to the colleges.

As you know, our federated liberal arts colleges, Campion and Luther, have largely maintained their complements in PHIL/CLAS. The University of Regina proper, facing increased demand from students for education outside its own founding disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences, is pleased that Campion and Luther are able to continue to do so. That the University now serves a much wider diversity of students (and student needs) than it did even a few years ago has become a key element in our planning and programming.

In discussing faculty complement, the AUR report focuses on comparisons with other Canadian departments of philosophy, saying that “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” (8-9).

However, the reviewers do not (and, given time constraints, likely were unable to) scan other disciplines at the University of Regina to see what resources are presently available **across this institution**, and compare those to current resources in PHIL/CLAS – including those at the federated colleges.

In future AURs, such intra-institutional comparisons are something we will specifically request of external reviewers, including comparisons between programs which can draw on federated college teaching (like Philosophy) and those that cannot (like Engineering, Chemistry, Education, and many others). AUR reports that lack these comparisons are incomplete.

Data provided to the PHIL/CLAS reviewers and published to the AUR webpage show the count of Philosophy majors (including CMST) ranged from 42 in Fall 2010 to 23 in Fall 2015, a decline that seems to mirror what is happening in many parts of the country. The count of graduate students, including SOPT, has been more stable over the same period, ranging from 7 to 9.

Using 2015 figures, 6.5 philosophers are therefore responsible for delivering the degree programs of 23 philosophy majors and 9 graduate students, 8 of whom are in SOPT. (Overall enrolments follow below.)

By contrast, in another department of the Faculty of Arts (Justice Studies), 6 faculty members, soon to be supplemented by a single 2-year term position, are responsible for 326 majors and approximately 12 graduate students.

Outside the Faculty of Arts, the Industrial Systems Engineering program has a faculty complement of 13, 3 of whom are lab instructors and one of whom is currently out of scope. This group of colleagues are currently responsible for 308 majors and 95 graduate students working toward MAsc, MEng, and PhD degrees. Similar examples can be multiplied.

These figures suggest that, though PHIL/CLAS is indeed leanly resourced, other University of Regina programs are much more sharply constrained, with major implications for program quality, timely degree completion, teaching and supervisory loads of faculty members, and numerous related factors including program accreditation.

The external report recommends that, rather than focusing on numbers of majors, the "enrolment performance of the Department should be measured by total undergraduate enrolment." Total credit hours are certainly significant, but this recommendation lacks essential institutional context.

It overlooks the pressing need for more tenure-stream faculty positions in programs whose majors number in the hundreds; whose classes at all levels, including specialized offerings in Year 3 and Year 4 as well as graduate classes, grow ever larger; whose expanding graduate complements (in the case of Industrial Systems averaging more than 9 graduate students per available supervisor) require qualified tenure-stream supervisors; and whose research programs depend on the ability to compete successfully for external financial support.

The report describes the University as "a free rider when it comes to classical education" (9). This observation again lacks institutional context, as it seems to imply that any discipline taught at one of the federated colleges should also be taught at the University proper. Rather, the University of Regina functions as an integrated system, with students free to take courses from the University and its three federated colleges as their wishes and programs dictate. It is reasonable to argue that some specializations should indeed be centred in one of the federated colleges (examples include various Indigenous Studies and Indigenous language courses taught at First Nations University), complementing different resources available elsewhere on campus.

Indeed, there is an evident synergy between the discipline of classics (and specializations like classical and medieval studies) and the traditions of Campion College. As fewer colleagues choose to retire and competition for tenure-track lines becomes more exigent, this argument becomes more compelling.

Research and the MA program (p. 4, *passim*)

The CCAM-approved terms of reference for AURs state that it “is essential that the review team provide an opinion about the quality of the research and scholarly activities of the program, and the effectiveness of the relationships between teaching and research, particularly at the graduate level.”

The review team’s report says that members of the faculty “seem to have active research programs.” They add that “[i]f the quantity of research is not high across the board ... the quality of research is strong.” They further add that faculty members “do not participate in application to SSHRC grants and initiatives; doing so would be beneficial to the department and especially to graduate students” (4).

A number of questions arise from these brief observations from the externals on research. The University of Regina consistently ranks among the lowest of Canadian comprehensives for SSHRC funding. How can the Department of Philosophy and Classics do its part in turning this poor showing around?

Data show that the Department attracted a total of \$21K in external research support over a five-year period: a single grant in the 2012-13 year. Over the same five-year period the Department of Physics, a similar-sized unit that had its AUR at the same time, generated a total of \$3.2M in grant and contract revenue. Now, some will say such a comparison is unfair and indeed baseless. And it is true that physics research differs markedly from philosophical research in both its funding opportunities and its funding needs.

That said, the lack of external funding (and apparent multi-year lack of applications for funding) should be discussed in the context of this University’s general SSHRC performance.

So, too, should the reviewers’ statement that “the quantity of research is not high across the board.”

There are philosophers on our campus whose publication records are on a par with, or indeed exceed, those of peers at any Canadian universities. This is a cause for celebration. There are also those whose records of publication suggest that an adjustment in workload distribution might permit them to contribute more fully to the undergraduate teaching needs of the Department, thereby assisting the Department to maintain a robust curricular presence.

A mid-career professor at the University of Regina with a normal workload distribution of 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service, is now being recompensed approximately \$55,000 in annual salary and benefits for her or his research time, not including sabbaticals and other research-related support. If an individual’s research output – however it is measured over time – does not support ongoing annual expenditures of this magnitude, the Department of Philosophy and Classics may wish to review its teaching assignments, especially were it to contemplate a request for additional resources.

Finally, is the special-case MA in Philosophy sustainable? Should students seeking an MA in Philosophy be directed elsewhere? If Dr Drury’s CRC Tier I funding is no longer available to the SOPT program after her retirement, where will resources for SOPT MA students be found?

Lack of terms of reference for review (p. 11)

The reviewers state that the University “did not provide [them] with Terms of Reference for reviewing Philosophy and Classics ... [and] therefore relied on the University’s template for our Terms of Reference” (11). This seems to be the result of a miscommunication.

The only terms of reference (ToR) for AURs are those developed and approved by CCAM, posted to the website, and supplied to reviewers well in advance of the site visit. As far as my office staff is aware, the external reviewers for the present AUR made no request to us or to Dr McNutt for clarification of ToR governing the review.

We had no similar miscommunications with other review teams in last year’s AUR cycle, and will ensure that current and future external reviewers understand that CCAM’s ToR, appended below for convenient reference, apply to all AURs.

Collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan; asynchronous offerings

The report does not contemplate any form of collaboration between PHIL/CLAS at the University of Regina and at the University of Saskatchewan, nor does it mention alternative modes of course delivery. In a province with a population of a size with Calgary, collaboration between the two universities is a pressing need, especially in smaller disciplines. The Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School is the best example of a truly fruitful academic partnership between the two universities, but there are others such as the sharing of specialized expertise in areas such as health physics by the two universities’ respective Departments of Physics. The Department of Philosophy and Classics is urged to reach out to its counterpart at the University of Saskatchewan to determine what resources might be effectively shared for the benefit of students at both universities.

Similarly, the tremendous expansion of demand for asynchronous course offerings – by students both on- and off-campus – is something the Department should explore to grow enrolments and perhaps generate interest from prospective majors.

I hope you find this response useful, and am happy to discuss it with you and your colleagues at any time that is convenient.

Sincerely,



Thomas Chase
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Copies: Dr V Timmons, President and Vice-Chancellor
Dr D Malloy, Vice-President (Research)
Dr R Kleer, Dean of Arts
Dr J Meehan, President, Campion College
Dr B Hillis, President, Luther College
Dr A Herman, Chair, CCAM
Dr K McNutt, Executive Director, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
Mr B Christie, Associate Vice-President (Resource Planning)

Terms of Reference (online at <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-OPS-130-005.html>)

The expectation of the review team is that they will provide an opinion about the strengths and weaknesses of the unit's teaching, research and service programs. This will include an assessment of the numbers and diversity of academic and non-academic staff and their responsibilities, the resources provided, the effectiveness of the unit's organization, the quality of the working environment, the relations of the unit to others, the quality of educational opportunities provided to students—both graduate and undergraduate, and the effectiveness of the evaluation methods used to gauge student and program success. The review team is expected to offer recommendations for improvement and innovation.

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. It is essential that the review team provide an opinion about the quality of the research and scholarly activities of the program, and the effectiveness of the relationships between teaching and research, particularly at the graduate level.

In addition, the 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.

Site Visit

The review team for a particular review will meet at the University for an appropriate period of time, normally two days, and prepare a comprehensive report on the unit reviewed. It will consult widely in the preparation of this report with academic and administrative staff, students, administrators and alumni involved with the programs and activities of the unit under review. Departmental faculty from the federated colleges will be invited to participate in the process.

Typically, the review team's time will provide opportunities for consultation within the academic unit (faculty, staff and students); members of the University administration; and other individuals inside and outside of the University who influence or who are influenced by the activities of the unit and graduates of the program. Particular efforts must be made to ensure student participation. The on-site consultations commence with a working dinner hosted by the University administration and end with an exit interview with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Vice-President (Research), the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the Dean of the faculty.

The visit of the review team is to be advertised widely to the University community with an invitation for those who have a vested interest in the program(s) to contribute a written brief to the team which is normally submitted through the Chair of CCAM, prior to an advertised date. Such briefs are for use by the review team and will be held in confidence by the members of the review team.

The schedule of interviews during the visit will be developed by the unit under review with appropriate input from the office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

Report

While preparing the report, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Vice-President (Research), the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the Dean of the faculty, will be available to provide any additional information requested. The findings and recommendations of the review team should be presented in the form of a brief, concise, written report (with an executive summary) which will be received by the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) on behalf of CCAM. Provided that matters of individual sensitivity or confidentiality are handled with appropriate discretion, the report (in its entirety) will be made available to the Dean, the unit under review, CCAM and other interested parties. Normally, the report will be considered a public document and at the completion of the review process will be available, along with the unit's response, to members of Executive of Council.