

Final Assessment Report for the 2023-2024 Cyclical Review of the English and Film Studies Programs

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier’s Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of English and Film Studies and English Program at Brantford, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the units’ response, and the decanal responses. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

The last cyclical program review for the Department of English and Film Studies and the English Program at Brantford took place in 2015-2016.

The English and Film Studies Self-Study was primarily written by Dr. Russell Kilbourn (Department Chair) and Dr. Lisa Wood (Program Coordinator), but the document also notes significant contributions to the writing and reviewing of the document by faculty in both units, as well as participation of students in the process through a

variety of feedback mechanisms. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the units also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, and the Vice Dean of Arts, Dean of Liberal Arts, and Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on September 28, 2023, and an in-person site visit took place on both the Brantford and Waterloo campuses on March 4-5, 2024.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Judith Nicholson** from the Department of Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. John Ball** from the Department of English at the University of New Brunswick, and **Dr. Charlie Keil** from the Department of History and Cinema Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. During the external review, the committee had met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Trish McLaren, Associate Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Gavin Brockett, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts
- Dr. Brent Wolfe, Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Russell Kilbourn, Chair of the Department of English and Film Studies
- Contract Teaching Faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies
- Undergraduate students in the Department of English and Film Studies
- Full-time Faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies
- Graduate students in the Department of English and Film Studies
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Head of Collections and Acquisitions and Ms. Meredith Fischer, Liaison Librarian
- Dr. Lisa Wood, English Program Coordinator
- Faculty in the English Program
- Dr. Janny Leung, Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Undergraduate students in the English Program
- Ms. Nicole Morgan, Academic Program Assistant and Ms. Jamie Wheeler, Manager: Academic Advising
- Ms. Julie Pong, Manager: BA/LLB Sussex Partnership
- Joint closing meeting with Dr. Russell Kilbourn and Dr. Lisa Wood
- Ms. Sally Heath, Manager: Academic Program Development and Review

The review committee submitted their completed report on April 12, 2024. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of English and Film Studies incorporates undergraduate English programs at two campuses (Waterloo and Brantford), a single undergraduate Film Studies program (at the Waterloo campus) and two graduate programs, at the M.A. and Ph.D. level, that combine English and Film (and are offered solely at Waterloo). Maintaining quality of instruction and sufficient curricular breadth would be a challenge in ideal circumstances; however, the current circumstances are anything but ideal, with the department facing constraints that are multiple and varied. Despite those constraints, the department can point to many successes, not the least of which are high levels of student satisfaction across the board. Over the past several years, the department has proven itself to be capable of significant nimbleness and innovation, as it has navigated insufficient resources, inadequate staff support, and an apparent decline in student interest in Humanities programs overall. Making a laudable effort to capitalize on its strengths and to introduce new curricular pathways wherever possible, the department has managed to build its enrolments, oftentimes dramatically (as in the case of the Film Studies undergraduate program and Creative Writing courses), while still staying true to its core values. Even so, the department appears to be at a crossroads, and will be challenged even further as a raft of retirements and demands for further innovation threaten to push the department to its capacity. It will be imperative for the university administration to recognize that the department is already doing its admirable best with very little, and cannot be expected to succeed if it receives even less in the years to come. Ideally, this report will spur the university to recognize that the department can continue to thrive only if supported more consistently and strategically by the administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 27 recommendations to improve the quality of the English and Film Studies programs at the university. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and responses from the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Recommendation #1: Develop one or more undergraduate courses that bridge the EN and FS disciplinary divides and count toward either program: for instance, a course on adaptation or a course on narrative forms.

Unit Response: Agreed, and we would like to be able to act on this recommendation in the near future. We have a longstanding online FS course on adaptation—FS262 Film Adaptation: Screen/Text—but there is room for more of this kind of inter-disciplinary integration, provided there is space to add such new courses without taking space away from required courses in either major. All of the department's curriculum is under regular and careful review, and any new courses must be created with popular appeal in mind; e.g. "Transformed Fictions;" "Narrative in Action"; "Medicine, Health, and Bioethics in Film"; etc.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean supports this recommendation and encourages the department to facilitate opportunities for students to learn about both disciplines. Flexibility in curriculum can strengthen a program while at the same time supporting student progress and learning beyond the standard disciplinary framework.

Recommendation #2: Offer non-required third-year courses in EN and FS in alternating years, rather than annually, where possible; students suggested that this would give Majors more options over their final two years.

Unit Response: This is already our practice in the Film Studies program. We never offer non-required 3rd-year courses in consecutive years. These courses are spaced by at least 2 years, and often more. The only 3rd-year course we offer in consecutive years is FS371 (Advanced Video Editing), depending on student demand. The vast majority of our courses are repeated no more often than every 2 years, unless required.

On the English side, as we now have fewer CTF instructors, full-time faculty will be offering a revised cycle of 300-level courses in each year. Going forward, the Chair, with due consultation, will ensure that courses are cycled in a way that allows students as much variety possible given our reduced faculty complement.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports this recommendation and recognizes the work that is already done by the Department in this regard.

Recommendation #3: Make information concerning which courses will be offered over the next two years available to students for program-planning purposes.

Unit Response: Agreed, wholeheartedly. The relatively small faculty complement in FS and the lack of renewed positions in EN makes it difficult to plan 2 years in advance because we don't always know who will be on leave for reasons of sabbaticals, administrative duties, and course remissions. The Department would be happy to implement this change in Fall 2024, with the proviso that courses listed for two years ahead are subject to change. Our practice is to tell students in the spring what is coming up the following year, but not 2 years in advance, or earlier in the school year. We certainly could tell students our plans after the completion of the course build in September, subject to budgetary approval. Generally, we can strive to better communicate to students via departmental promotional materials that aim to rotate courses as often as possible (given institutional constraints) to ensure an adequate variety of courses from year to year.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: As departments have worked to simplify curriculum across the Faculty, it has become slightly easier to identify which courses will be offered in the future. We will work with departments to project into the future as much as possible as it is to the benefit of students and faculty.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: Our Collective Agreement restricts us from deciding on teaching two years in advance, but as the program has suggested, it is possible to inform students of what's in the planning and provide an update closer to the time.

Recommendation #4: Avoid scheduling courses at the same time as other EN or FS courses likely to be needed by (or of interest to) the same students.

Unit Response: Agreed, but likely no need for action. This has been our practice for some years now, on both EN and FS sides. Nevertheless, the electronic scheduling program that the university currently uses continues to cause problems on this front.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts works very closely with the Registrar's Office to monitor class schedules and will continue to do so with this recommendation in mind.

Recommendation #5: Offer EN301 in the Fall term so that third-year students have the maximum opportunity to benefit from it and to apply their learning to remaining courses.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. Given that EN301 (Literary Theory) is a required course for English Honours majors, demand for it is high and we understand the need to offer it when it is most advantageous for our students. For 3rd-year students, it certainly makes sense to offer it in the fall semester so that they can apply its content to their remaining senior EN courses. However, we have also seen increasing demand for EN301 from our 2nd-year students and even some 1st-year students in the Sussex Law program. For these students, it would make more sense to offer EN301 in the winter semester, considering the timeframe of their degrees. Moreover, only 2 full-time members currently teach EN301, meaning that sabbaticals, research leaves, and/or administrative roles sometimes limit the degree of flexibility in offering this course in a particular semester. We nevertheless appreciate the reviewers' recommendation and will henceforth endeavour to offer EN301 in the fall, whenever possible.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts will work with the department to help them identify when it is best to offer specific courses, and as both Sussex and Co-op contribute to the complexity of scheduling we will provide as much assistance as possible.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I will defer to the Department's opinion on this one.

Recommendation #6: Consider returning teaching of EN190 to the department with caps of 25 (ideally) or 30 (maximum) students per section and establish a funding mechanism for this course that acknowledges its service-teaching role. Make opportunities to teach it available to experienced Ph.D. students.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. Ideally, we should be in charge of teaching a university-wide writing course. Under the existing funding constraints, however, we do not have enough faculty or courses to mount EN 190 at a cap of 30 students. Some of our Ph.D. students may be qualified to teach such a writing course, but others may not be. Our current Collective Agreement, moreover, does not allow for PhD students to teach courses ahead of CTF, so the Department's ability to use PhD students in teaching roles remains limited.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts continues to explore the best way to teach writing within Arts and across the university. We do not necessarily believe that English is the only location for such courses but recognize that faculty in the department have a lot to offer in this regard.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: We are planning to strengthen the offering of EN241: Advanced Academic Writing, but the cap will likely be higher than 30. We don't currently have PhD students on the Brantford campus. There is no separate funding mechanism for service teaching courses.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Department is familiar with opportunities for senior PhD students to teach courses through posting-exempt contract teaching positions. Perhaps this could be considered for EN190.

Recommendation #7: Develop more synchronous online courses that students on both campuses can take (especially but not only in the Spring/Summer) to broaden available offerings, particularly for Brantford students, with a mechanism for “counting” students from each campus.

Unit Response: Agreed. Synchronous online courses are useful, and the Dean of Arts has indicated that she will give her approval for this mode of delivery where justification and need are demonstrated. We have discussed the idea of offering 1 or 2 synchronous courses in each academic term. Such a measure will expand learning opportunities for students in English and Film Studies at the Waterloo campus, students at the Brantford campus, and students in the Vancouver Film School Pathway.

This spring (2024), we are offering 2 EN courses virtually and we will offer 1 next year as a test case in English. English and Film Studies’ respective co-op pathways will commence next year and, by Spring 2025, we will offer a limited number of synchronous online courses in English and Film Studies aimed at students who are unable to attend classes in person.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports this recommendation and will assist in coordinating with the Brantford campus.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I agree with the recommendation, but synchronous online courses need to be offered from both the Waterloo and the Brantford campus and coordination be made such that the offerings across campuses are balanced.

Recommendation #8: Add a first-year introductory film production course to the Film Studies curriculum.

Unit Response: Agreed. The FS program projects that one of the first tasks for our new colleague in film production, once hired, will likely be to design such a first-year introductory course. This new course would act as an ideal complement to our new streamlined, two 1st-year course model, which we plan to launch in Fall 2025. Like our current FS intro courses, the new production course would be capped at 200 and introduce majors and non-majors alike to the basics of film production within the broader FS context we establish already in our existing first-year courses. The new course would also include basic film theory, history, and other academic content, alongside the introductory focus on production modes, technologies, terms, concepts, and practices. This new course would ensure that the student who took this first year FS course was prepared with the requisite knowledge of Film Studies in order to progress in the program.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports this proposal in principle.

Recommendation #9: Consider implementing one or all of the following changes to the M.A. program: drop one course requirement (from seven, plus Methods to six, plus Methods); encourage more students to do the practicum or MRP in lieu of a Fall or Winter course; consider the usual completion time to be ten or eleven months (Sept-June for practicum students, Sept-July for MRP students).

Unit Response: Agreed, in most aspects. A proposal to drop course requirements for MA students from eight to seven has already been passed by the Graduate Committee and will be presented to the Department as a program modification in September 2024. Each year, 2-to-3 students express interest in the Major Research

Paper, and an even greater number (3-4) in the Professional Skills Option (PSO), but, because these are summer program elements requiring another semester of tuition, with no financial support for students at that time via Graduate Teaching Assistantships, their popularity will remain limited. We have explored obtaining a stipend from the Office of Development for students undertaking the PSO, which would contribute to its appeal, but permanent funds have not been forthcoming. Since the summer semester stretches from May until August, and students pay the same tuition fee whether they complete their MA in June, July, or August, there seems to be no financial rationale for an earlier completion date, after 10 or 11 months. Meanwhile, students' usual completion of the course MA after only 9 months remains one of its most marketable features.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports the recommendation and the response of the department.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Likewise, the AVP/Dean FGPS supports the recommendation and the response of the Department, although I would encourage the Department to continue to consider means of attracting more students to complete the MRP or PSO. For instance, as stated in the recommendation, could the MRP or PSO be completed during the winter term in lieu of course/s? That could be very attractive to students interested in these advanced learning and experiential opportunities, but without lengthening time-to-completion of their program.

Recommendation #10: For both the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, develop courses that bridge the EN and FS disciplinary divide. Offer between one and three such courses every year, and thus between two and six or more overall (to avoid offering the same course[s] in successive years) along with one or two each with a purely EN or FS focus.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. Starting in Fall 2024, the department will begin exploring the creation of one course each semester that satisfies this requirement, on a rotating basis, as resources permit.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports the recommendation and the response of the department.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Likewise, the AVP/Dean of FGPS supports the recommendation and the response of the Department.

Recommendation #11: On the Brantford campus, make Creative Writing a more prominent component of the program. Support this emphasis with a tenure-track hire in Creative Writing who is also qualified to teach literature courses.

Unit Response: Agreed. The Brantford English program will continue to develop our Creative Writing offerings, including moving toward offering the Creative Writing minor/specialization on the Brantford campus. Current limitations on course offerings due to budgetary restrictions make it difficult to reliably offer the courses needed for students to complete the minor/specialization, but with expected increases in majors (primarily due to the Teaching Option and Sussex Law Pathway) we hope to be able to provide more robust offerings.

We would enthusiastically welcome a new hire with expertise in both literature and Creative Writing but recognize that this is unlikely in the current budgetary climate. We will continue to forge partnerships with creative writers to enhance our students' experiences in this area both within and outside of the classroom (for example, through the Laurier Stedman Fellowship, which welcomes author Alicia Elliott for the 2024-25 academic year, and the Edna Staebler Writer-in-Residence program).

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I am supportive of the development of more creating writing offerings on the Brantford campus, though a new hire is unlikely due to budgetary constraints at this point. The writer in residence program will be a great interim solution.

Recommendation #12: Provide TA grading support for all EN or FS courses with more than 70 students.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. Teaching load, TA support, and marking assistance for Full-time faculty and CTF are governed by the Collective Agreement. We acknowledge the high student-to-faculty ratio in our Department compared to similar programs in our neighbouring universities. As student numbers in the EN and FS programs increase each year, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain our high-quality undergraduate programs, and we respectfully ask the Administration to provide us with the additional teaching, marking, and administrative support (full-time, CTF, TA) that the external assessors recommend.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts will continue to provide marking assistance in line with the Collective Agreement.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: There are Collective Agreement and faculty-level guidelines about the provision of TAs to ensure equity across programs.

Recommendation #13: Provide scholarship funding to increase access for high-achieving students to the Vancouver Film School Pathway, regardless of means.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle, though likely no action is imminent. Scholarship funding for VFS students is not under the direct control of the department or FS program. These funds all come from VFS's operational budget and scholarship amounts each year are determined by them. That said, our VFS colleagues have been very open to listening to us when we request scholarship increases each year to cover already high tuition fees and the constantly rising cost of living in Vancouver.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports all efforts to raise funds for scholarships that recognize student performance and need.

Recommendation #14: Add an advisor specifically for the Vancouver Film School Pathway students.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. Unfortunately, this is also not something over which the FS program has direct control, as it is up to the Dean's office to create and pay for such a position. We have been assured that this is not possible in the foreseeable future, due to ongoing fiscal restraint in the University's operating budget.

Alternatively, we have looked into the possibility of sharing the much-increased VFS advising load with the Arts advising team in the Dean's office. Also promising is the possibility of assigning some of this service work to our new FT production hire, once they have taught for a term or two and have found their feet as a colleague.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: Financial constraints make additional Undergraduate Officers difficult to provide for, however we will continue to monitor the situation and to work with the Department.

Recommendation #15: Provide more funding from faculty and/or department budgets for honoraria for writers or other guest speakers visiting classes.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. A larger budget for guest writers and/or speakers would enable us to provide students with access to a wider and deeper range of experts that they can learn from and be inspired by. Department budgets for guest speakers are determined by the Dean of Arts Office.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts does not have funds to provide honoraria at present due to fiscal constraints. We do pay for travel for guest speakers.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: Such support can be requested from the Faculty Office on a case-by-case basis.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Unfortunately, the FGPS has no funding to support this activity.

Recommendation #16: Continue to work toward creating a dedicated library space on the Brantford campus.

Unit Response: Agreed, wholeheartedly. The Brantford English program will continue to advocate for a dedicated library space; however, we recognize that decisions about infrastructure are not within the program's control.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: This is a goal we are working towards as an institution but will take some time to realize given the current budget environment.

Recommendation #17: Given impending retirements and the non-replacement of recent retirements in the context of increasing numbers of program students, prioritize hiring to ensure that faculty complement does not shrink further. To support the graduate program and the department's research mission, these hires should be in the professor stream, not the professional teaching stream.

Unit Response: Agreed. Another one (or two!) FT hires, first on the English side and then, ideally, another on the Film Studies side, would only begin to assuage this growing gap in faculty complement vs annually increasing enrollments in both programs. And this is to speak only of our undergraduate programs; with each passing year another faculty member retires and goes unreplaced, leaving significant scholarly areas and cutting-edge and/or fully established academic fields uncovered, and (more pragmatically) creating frustrating gaps in CAE, SAE, and PhD dissertation supervision and committee membership.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts is aware of the need to ensure the department has adequate full time faculty to deliver its program. As student interest in the Major is strong this will enable us to prioritize hiring to the department as resources allow.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I agree that if replacement hires are made, they should be in the professor stream rather than PTP. When these hires can be made will be subject to budgetary constraints.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: From a graduate program perspective, I support the recommendation to the extent possible given budgetary constraints.

Recommendation #18: Given the reduced complement of permanent faculty members and increased number of Majors at Waterloo, maintain and/or increase the budgets for Contract Teaching Faculty so as not to jeopardize proper program delivery.

Unit Response: Agreed. However, action depends on resources and, as with VFS funding, new faculty lines, or the CTF budget, the Department has little or no control over resource decisions. The issue of CTF-taught courses is complex and varies between programs; while we acknowledge and value our CTF members, some of whom have been teaching with us as colleagues for 20+ years, we recognize that having typically 60% of Film Studies courses each year taught by CTF instead of FT faculty is unsustainable if our goal is to build the FS program on both the academic and production sides. At present we have 5 FT Film Studies faculty, with one new FT TT faculty member in production in the process of being hired for Fall 2024. In English we currently have 10 FT faculty, with another likely retirement looming for next year. In either case, these numbers are simply inadequate to ensure proper sustainable program delivery, going forward.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts is aware of the strain on the department related to faculty retirement and teaching load, and it recognizes the value of CTF colleagues who ensure the success of the program. We will continue to allocate resources to support each department as best we can under increasingly challenging fiscal circumstances.

Recommendation #19: Given the popularity of Creative Writing courses and the relatively new Major and Concentration in CW at Waterloo, as well as the upcoming expected retirements of two of the department's CW instructors, consider a tenure-track hire in Creative Writing, seeking a candidate with a terminal degree in English or CW (Ph.D. preferred, M.A. or M.F.A. required) who is also qualified to teach literature courses. Alternatively, or as well, CW could be named as a desirable secondary area of expertise in postings for academic tenure-track positions.

Unit Response: Agreed. This is a creative and helpful suggestion in the face of a request for a potential hire in English for next year. The idea of combining Creative Writing with a scholarly area of expertise, whether Early Modern or some other, would help to address more than one deficit in terms of course offerings in popular and/or essential areas of English literature. This faculty member might also be in a position to teach CW courses that would benefit FS majors interested in this field. The Department will continue to strategize the hiring of FT and CT faculty members on the basis of the often-evolving needs of the department, with resources, potential area gaps, and resources in mind.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts will work with the department to prioritize hiring of new FT as resources allow.

Recommendation #20: Given the small number of full-time faculty at Brantford, and the comparatively large number of expected retirements in the next five years, develop a plan to sustain the program through replacement hires in areas of most need, aiming to hire at least one BIPOC faculty member in the interests of diversity and Indigenization.

Unit Response: Agreed. The program will be working with the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts over the next two years to ensure the sustainability of English at Brantford. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our program, and hiring a BIPOC faculty member would help to further this goal. The budget crisis makes it difficult at this point to expect a new hire, but we will advocate for replacement hires as our current small faculty complement begins to retire in 2026.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I agree that when new hires are made, we should aim for diversifying our faculty complement. When such replacement hires can be made will be subject to budgetary constraints.

Recommendation #21: Every Fall term, encourage and mentor high-achieving fourth-year EN or FS students on both campuses to consider the WLU M.A. program and to apply for a SSHRC grant. Similarly, offer such mentorship to students intending to apply to other M.A. programs; invite such students to any workshops included in the graduate research methods course. Relatedly, look for ways to attract more high-achieving applicants to the combined B.A./M.A. program, preparing them to apply to SSHRC in their fourth year.

Unit Response: Agreed. Present practice includes the departmental graduate coordinator attending all senior English and Film Studies seminars in the fall to apprise students of the MA program, and to encourage them to apply. Similarly, high achievers in the program receive targeted emails informing them of the MA program and their eligibility for applying. Finally, all students currently enrolled in the BA/MA stream receive individualized emails and, in some cases, phone calls and personal meetings (if they show interest) regarding the benefits of applying to the MA program. As well, current advertising outreach targets institutions in Ontario (and next year Canada more broadly) that do not currently have a graduate program in English or Film Studies, in an attempt to boost applications and enrollments. Currently, application workshops for the SSHRC grant at the MA level are offered by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, which advertises them to undergraduate students. Such workshops address the university student community at large, but they can also be requested at the program-specific level, as we have done for next year's MA cohort. The Department will also explore ways of including senior undergraduate students in good standing in our EN600 course offerings.

SSHRC grant application for 4th year students: Going forward, the EN and FS UG advisors will identify 1 or 2 students with high GPAs entering Year 4 in August of each year, encouraging those who are interested to write a proposal that is competitive at the SSHRC MA level. In the past, we had a grad school advisor position, and this colleague would hold a workshop in early October. This faculty member has since retired, however, and we have not continued offering workshops for undergrads.

We have arranged for an annual SSHRC/OGS workshop for senior undergraduates via the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, starting in the fall of 2024. This workshop will be recorded and made accessible on an ongoing basis to all undergraduate students requiring information on this process.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts supports this recommendation and the department's response.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I am supportive of the program's response to the recommendation.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Department has identified several initiatives to recruit senior undergraduate students into the MA program. Writing Services can also provide support to senior undergraduate students completing SSHRC scholarship applications. The Career Development Centre also normally holds workshops in the fall term for senior undergraduate students interested in applying to graduate programs.

Recommendation #22: On the Brantford campus, appoint a faculty advisor, preferably with course release, to supplement the centralized advisor's efforts and to provide program-specific advice to declared Majors and Minors.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. The committee's recommendation here highlights for us the need for further assistance to undergraduates as they work through their program requirements. Appointing a faculty advisor in the English program presents some challenges, however. English faculty at Brantford have substantial service loads, and without a course release (unlikely with budget restrictions) for this labour, a faculty advisor would face an undue burden of extra work.

Because this is an issue of concern, we plan to identify specific problems through discussions and surveys to determine where students are experiencing problems. Based on these responses, we will develop potential solutions. In the interim, the Program Coordinator will prioritize developing a closer consultative relationship with centralized Advising to help us to clarify points of confusion.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: Advising is centralized on the Brantford campus, and there is no provision for course release for faculty advising. I agree with the program's response – better understanding student issues through surveys and discussions and liaising with central advising to ensure students are well supported.

Recommendation #23: Reduce length of comprehensive exam reading lists to approximately 50 book-length works or equivalent.

Unit Response: Agreed. The Graduate Committee has already passed a motion to alter the comprehensive exam format and writing period, including shortening the reading lists. This proposal for a program modification will go before the Department in the fall of 2024.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: I will defer to the Dean of Graduate Studies on this matter.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: During my time with the external review committee, I raised the topic of time-to-completion for the program's PhD students and thought that should be

given some consideration. In particular, I raised a question about the intensity of the comprehensive exam process, language requirement, course demands etc., which perhaps have contributed to Recommendation #23 and #24. I am pleased to see that this is indeed leading to actions by the Department.

Recommendation #24: To speed up time to completion, either drop the language requirement for the Ph.D. (as some other programs have done) or allow undergraduate language courses to count in lieu of such a requirement.

Unit Response: Agreed, although no action is required. Undergraduate language courses can already be counted in lieu of this requirement.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: I will defer to the Dean of Graduate Studies on this matter.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: If there are sufficient data for the Department to examine time-to-completion for those PhD students that have obtained the language requirement via an undergraduate course versus those that have not, that might be informative. If other programs have dropped the language requirement, perhaps this is something for the Department to re-consider.

Recommendation #25: Now that the department has admitted its first two international M.A. students (as of Fall 2023), it should commit to a policy of providing financial support commensurate with that offered to their domestic peers. If such support can't be supplied, international admissions should not occur.

Unit Response: Agreed, for PhD students. The Department has already asked that the FGPS portal for International PhD admissions be closed, and they have complied, and we will no longer accept these students into our program. The MA, however, is only an 8-12 month program. The 2 international students currently in the MA program have proved decidedly beneficial to it, and the decision has been made to continue to accept such students if they can prove financial stability.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts cannot commit to financial support for international graduate students at present.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Please see response of the Vice Dean, Faculty of Arts. The Department is correct – our institutional practice is that for offers to be issued to international PhD students, a financial package equivalent to domestic PhD students is required.

Recommendation #26: Increase funding to Ph.D. students from four years to five, as other PhD programs have done. This approach recognizes a realistic time to completion for these students.

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. The Department would love to increase this funding, but this is the purview of the provincial government, the Dean of Arts, and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: For further discussion with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: I'm not sure what other programs the external review committee are referring to. I can understand why extending financial support to PhD students in their 5th year would be desirable, but I would be in favour of finding ways to speed up time-to-completion. Alternatively, or in addition, perhaps the Department can more often consider a co-supervisory model where financial resources from grants held by faculty members could be pooled to support PhD students that are beyond 4 years.

Recommendation #27: To better establish the Brantford program's identity in a crowded field, and to promote it as a niche program in an interdisciplinary campus rather than a small generic one, consider renaming the program (and thus the offering unit); one possibility would be "English and Storytelling."

Unit Response: Agreed, in principle. We are grateful to the committee for recognizing the unique interdisciplinary strengths of the English program at the Brantford campus and agree that "English" does not necessarily capture our potential. We have put some thought into identifying a new program title, but so far nothing has seemed suitable.

English at Brantford is currently undergoing significant changes with the addition of the Teaching Option and the Sussex Law pathway. We expect that these changes will affect the culture and composition of the program, through shifting priorities in the student body, and the potential addition of new courses tailored to our partner programs (e.g., law and education). As the new streams become integrated into the English program and we have a clearer sense of a new program identity, we will revisit the appropriateness of renaming the program.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I appreciate the recommendation and renaming as a way of differentiation is a potential strategy we can adopt. We will just need to make sure that whatever new name is chosen has wide currency and is something high school students can easily understand, to avoid repeating the same mistake that other programs on the Brantford campus has made.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Dean of Arts recognizes the commitment of both full time and part time faculty in delivering a first-rate program build on strong pedagogy and outstanding research. Both English and Film Studies are very popular with students today and we look forward to supporting the programs as they respond to student interest at a time when resources are very limited.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I agree that the program's deliverables are well aligned with the university's strategic academic plan and its curriculum prepares students well for the future. I also wish to recognize the program's effort in decolonizing the curriculum.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: To the credit of its dedicated faculty, the Department has consistently attracted a steady number of graduate students to both its MA and PhD programs. Graduate students have a broad range of opportunities to develop professional and research skills. MA time-to-completion rates are excellent, and the length of the program is clearly a draw for its students. Experiential learning opportunities for MA students offered through the 'Professional Skills Option' is a strength. Clearly,

there is substantial rigour associated with fulfilling the requirements of the PhD degree, but this needs to be balanced with reasonable expectations regarding time-to-completion.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: Both Co-op and Sussex will bring new challenges to the department in the next few years, and we look forward to supporting colleagues as they navigate these. We will support both undergraduate and graduate teaching, and do our best to respond to the needs of a growing department.

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: On the Brantford campus, the program will continue its efforts in attracting majors and in expanding its service teaching. The Sussex pathway and the Teaching Option are expected to strengthen the appeal of the program, and more collaborative efforts could be identified in the future.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Finding ways to promote and attract more MA students to the Major Research Paper and Professional Skills Option will enhance the appeal of the program and the graduate student experience. An area to focus on at the PhD level is reviewing and modifying requirements of the degree including the comprehensive exam and language requirements, to accelerate time-to-completion. I appreciate that the Department has already taken important steps in this direction.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Heidi Northwood

September 16, 2024



APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: October 24, 2024

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee: January 9, 2024

Submitted to Senate (for information): March 4, 2025

Implementation Report Due Date: March 4, 2027

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The following Implementation Plan was created by the Vice Dean of Arts, Dean of Liberal Arts and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as part of the Decanal Response.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
Recommendation #1: Develop one or more undergraduate courses that bridge the EN and FS disciplinary divides and count toward either program: for instance, a course on adaptation or a course on narrative forms.	Department		September 2026	
Recommendation #2: Offer non-required third-year courses in EN and FS in alternating years, rather than annually, where possible; students suggested that this would give Majors more options over their final two years.	Department		September 2026	
Recommendation #3: Make information concerning which courses will be offered over the next two years available to students for program-planning purposes.	Department & Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #4: Avoid scheduling courses at the same time as other EN or FS courses likely to be needed by (or of interest to) the same students.	Department & Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #5: Offer EN301 in the Fall term so that third-year students have the maximum opportunity to benefit from it	Department		September 2027	

and to apply their learning to remaining courses.				
Recommendation #6: Consider returning teaching of EN190 to the department with caps of 25 (ideally) or 30 (maximum) students per section and establish a funding mechanism for this course that acknowledges its service-teaching role. Make opportunities to teach it available to experienced Ph.D. students.	Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #7: Develop more synchronous online courses that students on both campuses can take (especially but not only in the Spring/Summer) to broaden available offerings, particularly for Brantford students, with a mechanism for “counting” students from each campus.	Department		September 2027	
Recommendation #8: Add a first-year introductory film production course to the Film Studies curriculum.	Department		September 2027	
Recommendation #9: Consider implementing one or all of the following changes to the M.A. program: drop one course requirement (from seven, plus Methods to six, plus Methods); encourage more students to do the practicum or MRP in lieu of a Fall or Winter course; consider the usual completion time to be ten or	Department		September 2025	

eleven months (Sept-June for practicum students, Sept-July for MRP students).				
Recommendation #10: For both the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, develop courses that bridge the EN and FS disciplinary divide. Offer between one and three such courses every year, and thus between two and six or more overall (to avoid offering the same course[s] in successive years) along with one or two each with a purely EN or FS focus.	Department		September 2026	
Recommendation #11: On the Brantford campus, make Creative Writing a more prominent component of the program. Support this emphasis with a tenure-track hire in Creative Writing who is also qualified to teach literature courses.	English program in Brantford		Submit curriculum proposal by 2025-2026	Only partial completion expected, as tenure track hire is subject to budgetary constraint
Recommendation #12: Provide TA grading support for all EN or FS courses with more than 70 students.	Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #13: Provide scholarship funding to increase access for high-achieving students to the Vancouver Film School Pathway, regardless of means.	Department		September 2028	
Recommendation #14: Add an advisor specifically for the Vancouver Film School Pathway students.	Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #15: Provide more funding from faculty and/or department	Dean		Ongoing	

budgets for honoraria for writers or other guest speakers visiting classes.				
Recommendation #16: Continue to work toward creating a dedicated library space on the Brantford campus.	Senior leadership and advancement team	Senior leadership and advancement team	Ongoing	This recommendation has not been prioritized for implementation
Recommendation #17: Given impending retirements and the non-replacement of recent retirements in the context of increasing numbers of program students, prioritize hiring to ensure that faculty complement does not shrink further. To support the graduate program and the department's research mission, these hires should be in the professor stream, not the professional teaching stream.	Department & Dean		September 2028	
Recommendation #18: Given the reduced complement of permanent faculty members and increased number of Majors at Waterloo, maintain and/or increase the budgets for Contract Teaching Faculty so as not to jeopardize proper program delivery.	Dean		Ongoing	
Recommendation #19: Given the popularity of Creative Writing courses and the relatively new Major and Concentration in CW at Waterloo, as well as the upcoming expected retirements of two of the department's CW instructors, consider a tenure-track hire in Creative Writing, seeking a candidate with a terminal degree in English	Dean		September 2029	

<p>or CW (Ph.D. preferred, M.A. or M.F.A. required) who is also qualified to teach literature courses. Alternatively, or as well, CW could be named as a desirable secondary area of expertise in postings for academic tenure-track positions.</p>				
<p>Recommendation #20: Given the small number of full-time faculty at Brantford, and the comparatively large number of expected retirements in the next five years, develop a plan to sustain the program through replacement hires in areas of most need, aiming to hire at least one BIPOC faculty member in the interests of diversity and Indigenization.</p>	<p>This recommendation has not been prioritized for implementation</p>			<p>Replacement hires will be subject to budgetary constraint</p>
<p>Recommendation #21: Every Fall term, encourage and mentor high-achieving fourth-year EN or FS students on both campuses to consider the WLU M.A. program and to apply for a SSHRC grant. Similarly, offer such mentorship to students intending to apply to other M.A. programs; invite such students to any workshops included in the graduate research methods course. Relatedly, look for ways to attract more high-achieving applicants to the combined B.A./M.A. program, preparing them to apply to SSHRC in their fourth year.</p>	<p>Department</p>			

<p>Recommendation #22: On the Brantford campus, appoint a faculty advisor, preferably with course release, to supplement the centralized advisor's efforts and to provide program-specific advice to declared Majors and Minors.</p>	<p><i>This recommendation has not been prioritized for implementation.</i></p>			
<p>Recommendation #23: Reduce length of comprehensive exam reading lists to approximately 50 book-length works or equivalent.</p>	<p>Department</p>		<p>September 2025</p>	
<p>Recommendation #24: To speed up time to completion, either drop the language requirement for the Ph.D. (as some other programs have done) or allow undergraduate language courses to count in lieu of such a requirement.</p>	<p>Department</p>		<p>Already current practice; no further action required</p>	
<p>Recommendation #25: Now that the department has admitted its first two international M.A. students (as of Fall 2023), it should commit to a policy of providing financial support commensurate with that offered to their domestic peers. If such support can't be supplied, international admissions should not occur.</p>	<p>Department</p>		<p>September 2025</p>	
<p>Recommendation #26: Increase funding to Ph.D. students from four years to five, as other PhD programs have done. This approach recognizes a realistic time to completion for these students.</p>	<p>Department to consult with Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies</p>		<p>Discuss feasibility or alternatives with FGPS by September 2025</p>	

<p>Recommendation #27: To better establish the Brantford program’s identity in a crowded field, and to promote it as a niche program in an interdisciplinary campus rather than a small generic one, consider renaming the program (and thus the offering unit); one possibility would be “English and Storytelling.”</p>	<p>English program in Brantford</p>		<p>By 2025-2026, the program should consider whether a name change is appropriate.</p>	
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