

Academic Unit Planning (AUP) Lay Summary Document: Department of History

14 August 2023

Self-study Process:

The AUP Process for the Department of History was begun by the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) in August 2021. The Department formed a committee consisting of Sébastien Rossignol, Dominique Brégent-Heald and Stephan Curtis (Head) and were joined by Jeff Webb (incoming Head in February). The Department undertook its self-study that autumn, and submitted the Self Study Document to the Dean of HSS in June 2022. The external review panel conducted its site visit in October 2022, and the Department received the Review Panel Report in November 2022. We began the process of evaluating, drafting a response and action plan in January 2023. That was somewhat disrupted by a labour dispute during the winter semester. The History Department Response and Action Plan was received and accepted by the Dean in April 2023. We are entering into a departmental retreat in September 2023 to discuss our next course of action.

Self-Study Report highlights:

The Self-Study process included collecting statistical information from CIAP, surveying undergraduate and graduate students, and reviewing the department's programs. We were pleased that the students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Department, and we remain proud of the excellence of the education our students receive despite the challenges we face. We also compared our curriculum and programs with those of similar universities. After some introspection, we reaffirmed our top hiring priority of an Indigenous Historian, as consistent with Memorial's Indigenization Policy, and to support the undergraduate and graduate curriculum as well as the department's research agenda. In hiring decisions, we intend to maintain a commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness out of a strong opinion that a diversity of viewpoints is essential in academic work. We thank CIAP, the members of the External Panel, and the Dean's Office for their aid.

External Panel Report and Recommendations:

The External Panel (Dr Lisa Chilton, UPEI; Dr Raymond Blake, U Regina; Dr Danine Farquharson, MUN; and Dr Barry Galton, MUN) recognized that the "faculty complement must be increased as soon as possible." It reported that the current faculty members are dedicated thoughtful educators, who offer "good breadth and depth, and the program structures have integrity." The Panel expressed concern that cuts to the faculty complement threatened the operations of the unit, and recommended the Department:

- A: Seek new faculty members to assist with continuing work of EDI and Anti-Racism
- B: Explore opportunities for collaborations with other units.
- C: Reconsider degree requirements for BA, and BA honours.
- D: Revisit PhD comprehensive exam process in light of the Canadian Historical Association report on the State of the PHD in Canada.
- E: Regularly update webpages and social media to articulate the successes and achievements of the Department.
- F: Engage with the community on a more formal basis.
- G: Continue to advocate for maintaining staff positions in the face of planned retirements.

Unit Response and Action Plan:

The Department was pleased that the External Panel supported our aspirations, however we don't accept a few of its recommendations. The number of courses required for an Honours degree is a faculty regulation, not a departmental one, so we cannot change it. We believe that the enrolment caps on the fourth-year courses are pedagogically appropriate. The hiring of additional faculty members and additional resources are beyond the direct control of the Department.

We are implementing a number of actions and strategies that will respond to our challenges and build on our opportunities and have tasked the Head of the Department, the Director of Graduate Studies and the Undergraduate Coordinator with implementing them. As of the summer of 2023 several of the action items are in progress.

- 1: We continue to advocate for replacement positions to maintain the integrity of the undergraduate and graduate programs. In doing so we maintain our commitment to diversity as a source of research innovation and effective pedagogy, and we continue to advocate for hires in the areas of Indigenous History and the history of race and diaspora.
- 2: We continue to work with people in cognate academic units to leverage the teaching and research capacity of the Department.
- 3: The Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Graduate Committee continue to periodically reevaluate degree recommendations, and the Head works to achieve a balanced and excellent program.
- 4: The Departmental Website and social media presence continue to be inadequate. Significant effort is necessary to bring these up to a minimum standard and we intend to raise the unit's profile over the next few months.
- 5: We are working with the Dean of HSS to hire new administrative staff.