

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate

FROM: Jonathan Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies
Chair, Senate Graduate Studies Committee

SUBJECT: Faculty of Education: Calendar changes

DATE: January 31, 2006

cc: A. MacKinnon, Faculty of Education

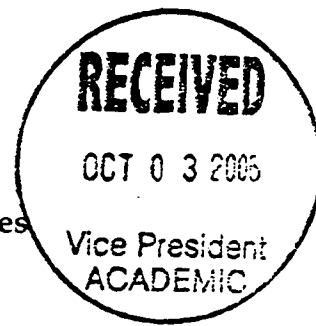
For information

At its meeting of 16th January 2006 Senate Graduate Studies Committee approved the following curriculum and calendar changes in the Faculty of Education, Field Programs:

1. **EDUC 867-5 Qualitative methods of educational research (GS2006.03)**
Remove "Prerequisite: EDUC 864"
Rationale:
The new stream of M.Ed. in Educational Practice which was approved last year included in principle removal of the prerequisite for EDUC 867-5.
2. **Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Studies in Education (GS 2006.04)**
Change from:
"With the director of field programs approval, up to eight credit hours of other acceptable course work may be used to complete the requirements of the diploma."
to:
"Coursework from other programs or universities may not be transferred into the Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Studies in Education."
Rationale:
Course credit transfers were to facilitate transition from post-baccalaureate to graduate diploma program, and are not needed after the implementation of the new stream of M.Ed. in Educational Practice.

Senators wishing to consult the documents concerning these items should contact Bobbie Grant, Senate Assistant at (604) 291-3168 or bgrant@sfu.ca

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
MEMORANDUM



To: Bill Krane
Associate VP Academic

From: John T. Pierce
Dean, FASS

Subject: English External Review:
Dean's Response

Date: September 29, 2005

The Department of English, like a number of departments within FASS, is in a state of transition as a process of renewal and pedagogical transformation takes place--the result of a significant retirement bulge and a commitment to remake itself. In the context of this transition and the inevitable growth pains that follow change, and the need to do things differently, I consider the general tenor of the external review to be a positive endorsement of the new hires, planning and new programming to date. The renewal represents an excellent example of capitalizing upon new hiring opportunities, of our competitiveness vis-à-vis other institutions in this process, as it does a vindication of the need for change and new approaches to internal governance and self management. As the Chair of English proudly points out, research productivity is judged to be high, as is the quality of undergraduate and MA graduate programming, a "collegial environment" exists, and the department is poised to reorganize its PhD program. The 'Print Culture' stream in the MA program is seen as being particularly innovative and successful.

The external review draws attention to a number of areas that need attention if not additional resources. I would like to respond to these recommendations using the same categories defined by the Chair of English. I will add a ninth category.

Teaching Load of Graduate Students

The External Review report spends considerable time on this issue. It is clear that much more can be done internally to assist students financially without an undue reliance on TAs. The Messenger Scholarships and the success in SSHRC awards are cases in point. I will be examining in more detail the actual workloads vis-à-vis other departments to determine the scale of the problem. I do take issue with the Reviewers with respect to their discomfort if not dislike of our tutorial system and its reliance upon graduate student supervision. This has been a distinctive and highly valued feature for undergraduate students at SFU.

Long-term Funding for Graduate Students

As much as I support improved funding for graduate students from the provincial government, any change in this situation, to mirror the Ontario model, will depend upon the active efforts of members of the TUPC in lobbying the Provincial government to boost funding to post graduate education. I believe the

department could follow the example of other departments in FASS and provide a more definite and longer term commitment to funding based upon TAs, RAships and scholarship monies.

Changes to the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

I believe that the Review team underestimated or misunderstood the extent of work that the department has done in both areas of programming. I believe that the Chair has satisfactorily explained the situation. I look forward to seeing the proposals.

The Condition and Planning of the PhD Program

Closely related to the previous issue are shortcomings identified in the PhD program--particularly course requirements. I think the department is well on its way to incorporating these and other changes. Noteworthy is a suggestion to better recognize and publicize the research achievements of graduate students. I would strongly urge the department to develop an action plan for this.

Imbalance in Faculty Complement and Pressures on Middle Rank

There are a number of interacting factors that shift and affect workload in a process of renewal. Our budgets are such that we simply cannot afford to hire a significant number of mid career or senior professors. This would simply exacerbate the scarcity of positions available. Those positions are defined by the number of FTEs. The fact that faculty complement has declined reflects a small realignment of resources within this Faculty to offset stronger growth pressures elsewhere. We have authorized a more senior appointment this year with an open search and we have been attentive to some but not all spousal needs. Clearly the spate of new hires will affect the growth of the supervisory pool for the PhD program. I believe that this is a relatively short term problem that the department will 'mature' out of in a few years. As to the work load of the current mid career faculty, every effort must be made to ensure that there is equity across this group. I am not convinced that this is the case today.

Teaching Resources and Undergraduate Delivery

I believe that the department Chair has responded effectively to these quite complicated and varied issues. Again, to reiterate an early point, I think that the tutorial model and more specifically the lecture/seminar model has great benefits for students. Like the Chair, I believe that these students as result of this model are not denied reasonable access to his/her professors. I am concerned about an over reliance on sessionals, however. Certainly increasing class sizes at the upper division level can improve the situation. The department is planning to do just that. And I would agree with the Chair that these classes should remain as 4 credit courses. Arguably, there is a systemic problem, however, in our reliance on sessionals. After increasing class sizes, making use of distance education courses and ensuring equitable teaching loads, we are still faced with the problem. Faculty-wide, there are insufficient resources to keep sessionals to a reasonably low level. The problem is further amplified by our success at SSHRC where an increasing number of faculty are receiving 'time release stipends'.

Department Planning

The Chair has provided a thoughtful response to the issue of more concerted planning efforts. The Review report, however, makes no mention of the role and importance of Three Year Plans within this Faculty and indeed for the University as a whole. These are carefully reviewed by my staff and we frequently meet with Chairs to discuss their planning documents--which we did during the last planning cycle. Since we are beginning a new planning cycle, the department will have a new opportunity and impetus to demonstrate that the Department of English takes planning seriously.

Evaluation of Teaching

Within the context of the complaints from the Review committee that there was insufficient data provided to evaluate teaching effectiveness, it might be useful for the University to provide summary statistics to all review teams. Failing that, departments should be encouraged to do their own in-house summary evaluations which would be an asset for biennial salary reviews. It must be acknowledged that the department is justifiably proud of its reputation as a unit that has produced a disproportionate share of faculty who have earned Excellence in Teaching awards.

Staffing Evaluation

The Review Committee made some brief observations about poor staff morale and inequities in workload. I will be meeting with the Chair to discuss this and if warranted, I will be asking our faculty assistant to investigate the matter further.



JTP/rt

Cc: T. Grieve, Chair, Dept. of English

**Simon Fraser University
Department of English**

Response to the External Review Report of April 7, 2005

Overview

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department of English External Review Report. This report has been made available to English Department faculty members, emeritus faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students. The response that follows, although it is not limited to reporting this feedback, certainly reflects it and attempts to provide both my own view and the consensus view of the Department of the External Review Report.

The Department of English thanks the External Review Team for their comprehensive and conscientious assessment of the Department's faculty, staff, and students and its programs, research, administration, and working environment. We welcomed the external review, considering it especially timely in light of the major renewal we are undergoing and our sense of promise and opportunity in what amounts to a second life of our Department.

We are gratified that the External Review Report endorsed our general sense that the Department is in very good shape. In the "Overview" of the Report, the Review Team states that they were "impressed with the Department as a whole," stressing the Department's "collegial environment," its maintenance of "a strong undergraduate program" and the improvements it has made to its MA Program. The Review Team considered the Department's research productivity – "the quality of its research activity, the degree to which it fosters through faculty interactions and collaboration a stimulating academic environment, and its effectiveness in securing external funding for research" – to be "very good across all ranks." The Review Team singled out for praise "the collaborative research being done in the area of Print Culture."

We are pleased, too, with the Review Team's assessment that "the quality of the Department's undergraduate teaching programs is high" and that "the Department is offering rigorous and innovative courses in both traditional and emerging areas of the discipline." The Review Team also reports that "the PhD students we met (a total of ten over two meetings) were unanimously enthusiastic about the quality of their professors, the range of courses and approaches available to them, and the climate of the Department" and that "graduate students reported very high levels of satisfaction about the instruction and supervision they were receiving."

Concerns Raised by the External Review Team

The External Review Report, then, was generally very positive, but the Review Team had a number of criticisms, and recommendations flowing from these, that my response will now address. Let me first generalize on the nature of these criticisms before moving to a detailed response to the Review Report's comments and recommendations.

Significant concerns (I stress "significant" because others appear to be the result of misinformation or misapprehension) expressed about the English Department in the External Review Report fall into 8 areas:

- the Department's reliance on graduate students in the delivery of its undergraduate program
- the lack of adequate and secure long-term funding for MA and PhD students
- changes to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum
- the current condition and state of planning of the PhD Program
- the imbalance in the current faculty complement caused by the spate of recent retirements and the demands and pressures consequently placed on middle-rank faculty
- the ability of the Department's teaching complement to provide timely and full undergraduate course delivery
- the lack of evidence of sustained Department planning
- evaluation of teaching

1. Teaching Load of Graduate Students

This represents a concern that the Department raised in its Self-Study Document for the External Review Team's consideration. We feel strongly that the situation in our Department, and indeed in many FASS departments, of having our graduate students divide their time (and their identities) between their studies and their work, and forcing them to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the latter, impedes the timely completion of graduate degrees and compromises the quality of their work as graduate students. At present, our graduate students' workload as teaching assistants does not measure up well in comparison to students in comparable programs – programs, for example, at the Reviewers' home institutions where significantly more graduate funding comes from scholarships.

We fully support the Review Team's recommendation (#11) that we reduce the teaching load of graduate students. Our success over the last few years (and especially this year) in securing federal scholarships for students in our graduate programs and the establishment of the Anne and Bill Messenger Endowment for Graduate Scholarships (\$1.5 million) will enable us to ensure this reduction for many, if not most, of our graduate students. This year 3 of our students will receive Messenger Scholarships; next year 10 will receive these awards (\$7000 for a non-teaching research semester). This year, English Department students won 10 SSHRC Fellowships: 5 at the MA level and 5 at the PhD level, including 3 prestigious Canada Government Scholarships. Regrettably, these awards were not announced until after the External Review Team's visit; such evidence of success might have lessened their concerns about our graduate programs.

2. Long-term Funding for Graduate Students

Similarly, we support the recommendation (#12) that we provide a guaranteed minimum funding package for our graduate students. Our success in securing scholarships for our

graduate students will assist us in meeting the suggested goal of the Review Team of offering PhD students guaranteed four-year funding. For example, the combination of endowed Department scholarships, University Graduate Fellowships, and Teaching Assistantships will enable us to guarantee long-term funding for many entering PhD students. Support from the University would help us achieve our goal of secure funding for all our PhD students. We respectfully suggest that securing long-term funding for graduate students should be a University and a Provincial Government priority. The institution of a funding mechanism resembling the Ontario Graduate Scholarship fund would go a long way in assisting SFU and other B.C. Universities to meet the national challenge for attracting top graduate students.

3. Changes to the Undergraduate and Graduate Program

The Review Team states that it “is concerned by the lack of finalized and departmentally-approved plans for revisions to its undergraduate and graduate programs” (10). This complaint, however, would appear to put the Department in a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” position. In preparation for the External Review, the Department undertook a Retreat (in November, 2004) the focus of which was to develop plans for significant revisions to our undergraduate and graduate programs. We subsequently discussed proposed changes at a number of regular Department meetings and at special brown-bag lunch meetings convened expressly for this purpose. When the Review Team made its site visit, these plans had proceeded to the point where they were virtually ready to be brought to the Department for voting and formal approval. We thought it wise to wait for the input of the Review Team before finalizing these plans.

In the last month, major changes to the undergraduate and graduate programs have been brought to Department meetings in the form of motions. Changes that have been approved include the recasting of our upper-division curriculum to introduce some 20 new 400-level majors seminars, the refocusing and renaming of some two dozen 300-level courses, and the addition of some 15 new graduate courses. The External Review Team took some issue with the Department’s proposed titles for new undergraduate courses; in some cases these have been revised in accordance with the Reviewers’ recommendations. Related to the issue of new course offerings is the Review Team’s useful suggestion that we consider hiring in the area of South Asian literature.

4. The Condition and Planning of the PhD Program

To a significant degree the Department has already taken steps to remedy what the External Review Team saw as structural weaknesses in our PhD program. At the Department meeting of May 24th, substantive changes to the PhD program will be discussed and, presumably, approved, including an increase in course requirements from 4 to 6, a new formalized timetable for progress through the degree to help ensure that students complete the PhD in four years, and newly designed field examinations. These three areas of program revision respond specifically to areas of concern identified by the Review Team. Once these changes to our undergraduate and graduate programs have

been approved at the Faculty and University level, the Department will have completed the planning recommended by the Review Team.

The Review Team makes valuable suggestions about our integrating more visibly the research of graduate students and faculty members and of creating ways to recognize and publicize the research achievements of our graduate students.

5. Imbalance in Faculty Complement and Pressure on Middle-Rank Faculty

Like most Departments at SFU, the English Department has recently experienced a spate of retirements – 14 over the last 6 years. These, coupled with the loss of faculty members who have taken up appointments at other universities or joint appointments here at SFU, have occasioned a large number of new hires, almost entirely at the Assistant Professor level. Moreover, the Department is still in a significant net loss position, going from some 38 regular faculty members in the late '90s to the present complement of 31. When the 4 newest hires begin in September of 2005, almost one-half of regular faculty in the Department will have taken up their positions in the last 5 years.

We thank the Review Team for its concern about the demands this has placed upon middle (and indeed lower) rank faculty members. The current Department Executive, for example, is composed of two Associate Professors (Chair and Associate Chair) and an Assistant Professor (Graduate Chair), and these duties can't help but negatively impact these individuals' scholarly advancement. The Review Team's raising of this issue reminds us that we have to work harder to ensure more involvement of senior faculty members on Department and supervisory committees. Yet given the breakdown of regular faculty (6 Professors, 9 Associate Professors, 12 Assistant Professors, 4 Lecturers) the current pressure on Associate and Assistant Professors is likely to continue or be exacerbated for some time (with 3 of the 6 Professors retiring this year and next).

The Review Team is right in seeing the problems that face us in terms of supervisory duties for students in our graduate programs, particularly PhD students. We do not see an expansion of our PhD program given the demands an increase of students would place on the relatively small number of tenured faculty members who are in a position to take on this responsibility. Expansion will need to wait until a fair number of pre-tenure faculty members get tenure.

In the short term, the Department feels it is urgent to proceed with some hirings at the Associate Professor level.

6. Teaching Resources and Undergraduate Course Delivery

Despite the reduction in faculty complement over the past 5 or 6 years, the Department of English has maintained its number of majors and maintained or slightly increased its overall course enrolments. It has done so, however, with some of the highest course-full turnaways in the University. Importantly, it has not done so with an increase in the appointment of Sessional Lecturers; in fact, our numbers in this category have decreased.

The Dean has been very supportive of needs for new hires. We know from experience that 3 appointments in a year are about as much as we can handle. We would hope to maintain this level of replacement over the next few years.

The Review Team seems to think that our system of lecture/tutorial condemns our undergraduates to "increasingly" experiencing close contact with graduate students at the expense of such contact with regular faculty. This is simply not the case. Faculty members now teach two tutorials when they lecture in a 100 or 200-level course (as opposed to one a few years ago), and the great majority of upper-division courses are taught by regular faculty in seminar situations. The Department's system of delivery of its 100 and 200 courses (with lectures of approximately 250 and 100, respectively) and tutorials of 15 students seems to have impressed the Review Team about as much as it impresses the makers of the *Maclean's* survey. In both assessments, the faculty member only gets "credit" for teaching 30 students, with TAs getting credit for the other 220 or 70 students. Such reckoning denies the important and usually very dynamic contact that students get with faculty members in two-thirds of the contact hours of such courses.

The Department feels that, despite our efforts and those of Jack Little, the University's representative on the Review Team, to explain the real benefits to students of SFU's method of delivering lower-level courses, the Review Team did not seriously engage this perspective. Perhaps it is inevitable that faculty members from other universities want programs to resemble what they are used to and what they might have a stake in defending. This may account for the recommendation (#4), which the Department vigorously opposes, that all upper-division English courses be changed from 4- to 3-credit courses. In any case, the criticism that the English Department's mode of delivery has become "ingrained" "dogma" seems to miss the point that the lecture-tutorial model in first- and second-year courses is very efficient, and the Department experiences very little enrolment pressure in these courses. It also fails to account for the way in which the Department's first- and second-year offerings must fit into the delivery model of the whole University.

If the Review Team's criticism of the lecture/seminar model is confined to upper-division courses, they raise an important issue. The Department is very concerned about enrolment pressures in these courses. The changes to our undergraduate curriculum summarized in point 3 above were contemplated with two goals in mind: first to revise our course offerings in line with current developments in the discipline and with the interests and expertise of new faculty members; and second, to enable us better to serve the needs of our majors and minors by providing more spaces in our courses, especially in upper-division courses. The problem is not so much a matter of the number of courses that the Department mounts. Although our net loss of faculty positions over the last few years has made it difficult "to offer a full range of course each academic year" (9), we have managed to do so and have met all demands for regular course rotation. The problem is the number of students in the courses, most of which are capped at 23. The Department's move to smaller 400-level seminars for our majors will be more than compensated for by substantial increases in the size of our 300-level courses. The changes to our upper-division curriculum are proposed with full awareness that such

changes must eventuate in a significantly higher faculty/student ratio in upper-division courses.

The addition of small 400-level seminars also enables the Department to meet the new "W" graduation requirement that necessitates students taking an upper-division course in their major. All 400-level seminars will be writing-intensive.

The Review Team takes issue with the number of students who avail themselves of the Department's Distance Education offerings, seeing these as primarily a stop-gap measure to ease enrolment pressures in our upper-division courses. We see Distance Education as serving primarily another function – that of serving the needs of students who need these courses due to pressures in scheduling and work – and are proud of our offerings, the majority of which were written by faculty members in the Department.

7. Department Planning

Recommendation #13 calls for the Department to "implement immediately a program of sustained planning." Presumably, this call was motivated by the Review Team's appraisal that such planning had not been done in the past or was not ongoing at present. Evidence of this putative lack of planning seems to come primarily from their sense of the state of our graduate programs, particularly the PhD program. The response given in point 3 above addresses many of these concerns. Other issues in planning seem to fasten on teaching resources for the undergraduate program (addressed in point 5 above). We assure the Dean and the University Administration that we take Department planning very seriously, that we have regularly engaged in careful consideration of our Three Year Plans, and that we will continue to be proactive in planning for the needs of our students, our hiring needs, our Department's research agenda, and the administration of the Department. Still, more can and needs to be done. Our experience preparing for this External Review has given us a good sense of the usefulness of Department retreats to take on the complex business of planning. The Department is contemplating forming a new standing committee to address these concerns.

More generally, the source of the complaint concerning a lack of planning seems to be revealed in a sentence remarkable for its uncharacteristic intemperance: "The lack of reliable data suggests a carelessness about the attention paid to the Department's programs and that the proposed revisions [to the graduate program] have no firm foundation" (17).

This accusation comes after a few paragraphs which reiterate the complaint that proposed program changes to the undergraduate program had not been fully developed and approved before the Review Team's visit and which tax the Department for misinforming them concerning details of one faculty member's publications and for not providing some specific data in advance of their visit.

I would like to respond to these three complaints. The first has already been addressed: the Department deliberately held off on finalizing program changes to get the benefit of

the Review Team's advice. The grounds for the second complaint are entirely mysterious. If there were an error in listing two books as published which were in fact in progress, the error must have had its source in the CV of the unnamed faculty member in question who was, apparently, eager to set the matter straight. Certainly no such claim was made in the Department's Self-Study Document. The accusation rankles because it is made to appear that the Department deliberately misled the Review Team.

We take responsibility for the third complaint. In the flurry of gathering together data for the Appendices that accompanied the Self-Study Document, some statistical information was not included. It was, however, provided on site. In part this reflects a problem in record keeping for our graduate program, a problem that we are working at remedying.

8. Evaluation of Teaching

The Review Team registered a concern that they were "not... provided with student evaluations of the Department's courses and instructors" and complained that they "received contradictory information about what kinds of comparative data were available on teaching" (8) to the Chair and the TPC that might be used to assess teaching. It seemed entirely impracticable to send the hundreds of these that are on file out to the Review Team as part of the package of Appendices. However, the Department should and could have made summary student evaluations for all courses taught since the last External Review available to the Review Team during their visit. That said, they only had to ask. Indeed, we wish they had, since we have reason to believe that evaluations of English courses and instructors are amongst the highest in the University. I would have liked to have been able to say this authoritatively in our Self-Study Document, but had been told by Analytical Studies that such comparative data on evaluations of English courses vis a vis other Departments' courses was unavailable.

Unfortunately, the subject of evaluation of faculty teaching never came up in my or the Associate Chair's discussions with the Review Team. This is an oversight on our part and, again, it is something we wish had been discussed since we are very conscientious in our evaluation and weighting of teaching in the salary review, renewal, tenure, and promotion processes. The Chair and the TPC have full access to teaching evaluations – the individual student forms, not just the summary sheets. These, along with course syllabi and teaching dossiers (including statements of teaching philosophy and reflections on teaching) make up an essential part of our evaluation of faculty members. In the case of renewal and tenure considerations, classroom observation of teaching is also part of this process. The Review Team makes the good point that such data and information on teaching "can provide support for teaching award nominations; and it provides an important component of the dossier of new PhDs" (8). We agree emphatically and encourage all faculty members to submit teaching dossiers, although we acknowledge that more assistance can be given to faculty members in learning to prepare effective ones. Nevertheless, we seem to have had some success with this over the years: our 9 Excellence in Teaching Awards is the highest number of any department in the University.

Recommendations of the External Review Team

Many of the recommendations have been discussed at some length in the preceding section. Here I want to make comment on the recommendations that have not been responded to and to summarize what the Department has done and will do to address the recommendations.

Recommendations 1 and 2

The Department will supply future review teams with student evaluation data, including comparative data. The Department has already established a multi-faceted process for evaluating teaching.

Recommendation 3

The Department has retitled some of its new 300- and 400-level courses in accord with this recommendation.

Recommendations 4 and 7

The Department is in the final stages of major revisions to its upper-level curriculum and feels strongly that the current 2-2 lecture/seminar vector is pedagogically sound. The revised 300-level courses can be run either as larger courses (30 students) with seminar activities built in to one class or as multi-seminar courses (with, say, 75 students in lecture, 25 in seminars).

Recommendation 5

We agree. We need all the help with the PeopleSoft/SIMS system that we can get.

Recommendation 6

Our contractual relationship with CODE and our budgeting for distance education courses in English precludes increasing contact between continuing faculty members (who write the courses) and distance education students. The recommendation that enrolment in distance education courses not exceed 10% of total enrolment seems reasonable. The Department's efforts to increase capacity in regular upper-division courses will assist us in realizing this goal.

Recommendation 8

Returning our faculty complement to 37 or 38 members will enable us to make a significant reduction in sessional appointments.

Recommendation 9

Improving data management in our graduate program, including, but not limited to, data about post-degree employment and continuing study, is a top priority.

Recommendation 10

We fully agree with this recommendation and are working to schedule some regular day sessions of our graduate course offerings in the 2005/06 academic year.

Recommendations 11 and 12

The continuing and growing success of our graduate students in attracting SSHRC and other scholarship funding as well as the scholarships made available to our students by the Anne and Bill Messenger Graduate Endowment will enable us to effect these outcomes. The Department believes that our efforts can be assisted by a concerted University initiative to increase the number of graduate scholarships.

Recommendation 13

The Department will continue its sustained planning activities.

Recommendation 14

The Department will seek such a review and be guided by advice on best practices for distributing workload among staff.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

April 7, 2005

Prepared by: Dr. Alan Bewell, University of Toronto
Dr. Jack Little, Simon Fraser University
Dr. Jo-Ann Wallace, University of Alberta
Dr. Susan Rudy, University of Calgary (Chair)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP	3
OVERVIEW	4
RESEARCH	5
TEACHING	7
DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION	16
THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT	17
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	19

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

As part of the University's regular cycle of reviews, the office of the Vice-President Academic struck an External Review Committee in the fall of 2004 to conduct "a comprehensive examination of the Department, its undergraduate and graduate programs, resources and facilities." The Committee was composed of the following: Susan Rudy, Chair (English, University of Calgary), Alan Bewell (English, University of Toronto), Jack Little (History, SFU), and Jo-Ann Wallace (English, University of Alberta). Prior to arriving on campus, the Committee received the following documents: Department Self-Study Materials; Draft Itinerary for Site Visit; Terms of Reference for the External Review; SFU Senate Guidelines for External Reviews; President's Agenda; Statement of Purpose; Three Year Plan of the Vice-President, Academic; Faculty of Arts Three Year Plan; Reports of the most current surveys of Baccalaureate Graduates; Data on SFU Research Grants and Contracts to Academic Departments; Data on Research Funding for the Department of English; 2004/2005 University Calendar; Senior Administrative Structure Chart; Senior Academic Administrative Structure Chart; Graduate Studies Fact Book; SFU Facts; Campus Map; SFU Travel Expense Claim Form and Policy.

A copy of the previous 1997 Review of the English Department was supplied by separate mail on the request of the Committee, following the recommendation of the 1997 Review. Further material was supplied after the Committee arrived: English Department Faculty cvs; a Data sheet on Graduate enrolment in English, 2000-04; English Department data on course enrolments; data on the enrolment of graduates in the MA and PhD programs and on postgraduate employment; data on graduate supervisions; data on research funding; a Proposal for a new Undergraduate Program in English; and the Graduate Program Handbook, 2004-05. Lacking both an undergraduate course description booklet and graduate course descriptions, the Committee had recourse to the internet to assess these aspects of the undergraduate and graduate programs. Further miscellaneous materials were supplied by faculty, staff, graduate students, and emeriti professors at the meetings. Appointments were scheduled so that we heard individually from the Chair of the Department and the Chairs of the Undergraduate and Graduate committees; 6 senior faculty; 5 junior faculty; 1 professor emeritus; 3 lecturers; 1 sessional instructor; representatives of the Print Culture group; 9 PhD students; 2 MA students; and administrative staff, both as a group and individually. The English Department arranged a luncheon, for which the Committee would like to extend its thanks. Also, on the first night we were invited to a poetry reading at Harbour Front Centre. We would like to thank the Chair of the Department of English, Tom Grieve, and the administrative staff for the role that they played in arranging our visit and providing us with a welcoming environment.

OVERVIEW

The Committee was impressed with the Department as a whole. The Department is working hard to achieve a warm collegial environment, for faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students. Given its recent history, this is an important achievement, though perhaps the ideal not yet reached would be to find ways to use disagreement in constructive ways, as a means of deepening the intellectual complexity and capacities of the Department.

The current administration, particularly the Chair, have shown a strong commitment to developing a congenial environment for research and teaching. Faculty and students greatly respect the efforts of the administration in this respect.

Employing the language of the 1997 Review, we see the Department as still in transition. Historically the emphasis in the English Department has been upon maintaining a strong undergraduate program, either in seminars or in lectures linked to tutorials. There is no doubt that this form of course delivery is valuable and something that sets undergraduate education at SFU apart from many other institutions. This kind of teaching is similar to education in a liberal arts college, with the difference that the students in the latter usually enjoy close contact with faculty, whereas increasingly at SFU students experience close classroom contact with graduate students (often in the MA program) or sessional instructors. Unfortunately, a dogma appears to have become ingrained that this is the only kind of teaching possible in the English Department, even though in recent years it has meant that students are having difficulty finding available courses or are having recourse to distance education in order to complete their degrees.

At the graduate level, responding to the 1997 Review, the Department has significantly improved its MA program, though this Committee feels that there is still room for improvement. The previous Review also made recommendations about the Doctoral Program, but unfortunately less has been achieved in this regard. The planning of the PhD Program is still at a relatively early stage, and the financial resources and administrative structures required to put in place a program that will produce fully qualified and competitive PhDs, who will go on to positions at major universities elsewhere, are not yet in place. Nevertheless, the program has substantially expanded, almost doubling in size since 2000 (from 12 to 21). Whereas the MA/PhD ratio from 1985 to 2000 was 10 to 1, it is now 3 to 2.

In discussions with the Department Chair and Graduate Chair, we concluded that there is a strong commitment, which we strongly encourage, to increase the academic demands and competitiveness of the Department's graduate programs. We feel that there is a need to address the over-dependence upon graduate students in the delivery of undergraduate courses. There is a need for more financial support and more extended financial packages if the Department is going to attract the best graduate students who will go on to teaching positions at major research universities.

In order to strengthen the graduate programs, the Department will need to distinguish, far more than it has in the past, the needs of its graduate students and of the graduate program from those of the undergraduate program. The need to balance competing needs will require tough decisions on the part of the administration and faculty of the Department. It is our opinion that the full implications of seeking to establish a nationally recognized PhD program have not been fully worked out, though there have been efforts to address graduate financing. The implications of the establishment of a vital PhD program for faculty and administrative workloads, faculty complement, and undergraduate course delivery have not, as far as we could see from our short visit, been addressed. The goal is a valuable one, but it will require strong leadership. Sustaining and administering a competitive and viable graduate program is likely to require teaching and administrative commitments on the part of the faculty that it has not previously experienced.

The rapidity of recent retirements in the Department combined with the hiring of a large number of new junior faculty offers new opportunities as well as risks. Most of its senior faculty has retired or are about to retire, and the number of junior faculty in the Department has significantly increased. This situation has placed great demands and pressures upon the middle-rank faculty, who may not be fully capable of giving the time to the Department that is required of them and full administrative activities may curtail their own research. Active efforts to achieve a more balanced faculty complement would alleviate this situation somewhat.

Research is very good across all ranks of the English Department. There is a commitment to research and in seeking research support. Collaborative and interdisciplinary scholarship is also a strongly visible component of the program.

Overall, it is our impression that this is a time when new things can happen in the English Department. It has achieved a great deal as an undergraduate university. Much is already in place, though still more needs to be done, if it is to achieve SFU's vision of transforming itself into one of the top five universities in Canada for graduate study.

RESEARCH

The Committee was asked to assess the research productivity of the Department, the quality of its research activity, the degree to which it fosters through faculty interactions and collaboration a stimulating academic environment, and its effectiveness in securing external funding for research. In these areas, the Department, as a whole, is very good. There is both energy and excitement concerning research across the senior, middle, and junior ranks. Some of the senior faculty have achieved excellent research records; for less senior faculty, the research profile is very good; and the new junior hires have provided solid evidence of excellent promise. It is hoped that with the proper nurturing of their academic careers, the latter two groups will achieve the international recognition that some of the more senior and retired faculty have achieved.

In assessing faculty research, we noted that a number of the cvs were missing (a few were subsequently supplied). and we noticed that at least in one instance, in the Department's Self Study, the description of work was incorrect. From what we could determine, faculty research is well represented in many of the traditional fields of study, from the Medieval to the contemporary periods. Regional literatures are well represented, particularly in British and Canadian literature. In regard to the latter, Canadian literature and poetics remains a particularly important research focus in the Department. With the outstanding resource of SFU's contemporary poetry collection and the increasing use of the collection for research and teaching, the Department should continue to remain one of the top-ranked Departments in Canada in this area. The Department has a reasonable number of faculty doing research in some of the newer geographical areas of literary study: Aboriginal studies, Scottish literatures, World Literature, Caribbean Literature.

It might consider strengthening its research, however, in a few additional areas. Given the important economic and cultural role that East and South Asian people have played and will continue to play in Vancouver and British Columbia, a much stronger commitment to East and South Asian literature within the Department would be advantageous. The Department currently has no one working in the area of South Asian literature. It does have the good fortune of having one of the foremost senior scholars in the area of Asian-North American literature, but he will soon retire. The Department might wish to consider not only a replacement hire in this area, but enough hires to allow for faculty collaboration in this area, one that would have strong links with the Canadian literature, poetics, and creative writing interests of the Department. Important new work is being done in diasporic theory and in Black-Canadian and Caribbean literatures; African literatures are not currently a focus of research in the Department.

Much of the excitement of the research currently being done in the Department derives from the range of methodologies and approaches being employed, and the manner in which these interact with field strengths, particularly in Canadian literature, and in creative writing. This balance has produced a distinctive research profile for the Department. Collaborative research is playing an increasingly important role in the culture of the Department. Outstanding in this regard, though at an early stage, is the collaborative research being done in the area of Print Culture. The field is cutting edge, and it is also broadly interdisciplinary. With its link to information studies and humanities computing, this area of study is likely, over the course of the upcoming decades, to change how we understand the production and dissemination of literature. The faculty working in this area have developed an important program in the Department, the MA Specialization in Print Culture, and this will increase SFU's research visibility. They have also established an annual Print Culture Speakers series. Their plans for a research institute seem feasible and worthwhile, and deserve strong support. An interdisciplinary interest in employing geography and spatial theory to the study of literature and culture also is an innovative aspect of the research of another group of the Faculty. Globalization, diaspora, and postcolonial studies represent another important collaborative group, along with Feminism, Gender, Popular Culture; and Language and Writing.

Faculty have been active in applying for research grants, and the success rates are quite good. The funds requested are in many cases somewhat lower than for other universities in Canada, so it would be useful for the Department to encourage faculty members to incorporate graduate research in their project proposals (for instance, including three graduate research assistants, one for each year of a three-year project). Faculty have indicated that more University funding for travel to conferences would be of benefit; at the same time, no one said that the current level of internal research support is insufficient. Support for conferences at SFU has helped increase the national and international visibility of collaborative research.

The Committee noticed that no materials indicated the research achievements of students in the two graduate student programs. The role that they play (or might play) in the research culture of the Department was thus unclear. As the Department moves toward developing its graduate programs, it would be of great benefit for it to foster and to cultivate more fully a model that other universities have adopted which considers graduate students as junior colleagues in research.

TEACHING

The External Review Committee was asked to provide the University with assurances that "the quality of the unit's teaching programs is high and there are measures in place to ensure their evaluation and revision" and to give an assessment of "the Department's planned revisions of its undergraduate and graduate programs." The Committee was also asked to evaluate "whether the Department of English's teaching resources are adequate to sustain its growing level of activity and to ensure a strong future in both research and teaching" as well as its graduate program with special attention to its Print Culture Specialty MA Program." Finally, the Committee was asked to consider the Department's plan to increase scholarship funding for graduate students and reduce their teaching duties.

The Department of English offers three programs: the Undergraduate (which includes major, minor, and honors programs as well as three joint majors), the Master's (which is primarily course-based), and the PhD (which includes a course component but is primarily a research degree). We will address the Undergraduate program first; our recommendations on the Master's and PhD programs follow.

Quality of teaching and measures for teaching evaluation

In our estimation, the quality of the Department's undergraduate teaching programs is high. However, our assessment is based on incomplete data. We were able to consult current course offerings (via the Department website); to meet with three undergraduate students (including the President of the English Students' Union) and numerous instructors (faculty members, one sessional instructor, at least a dozen graduate teaching assistants); and to examine statistical data regarding teaching resources and course

delivery. We were not, however, provided with student evaluations of the Department's courses and instructors. We have since learned that compulsory student evaluations of teaching and that data for every course and instructor would have been available. But in the absence of any documentation provided in the Department's *Self-Study*, our comments below stand.

According to the Department's "2004-2007 Three-Year Plan," it has recently instituted "a roughly quantified ranking system" in its biennial salary reviews that "weights research and teaching equally." This is laudable. However, it is not clear whether or not the Department Chair is provided with the results of student evaluations in a form that would allow him/her to assess teaching comparatively. During our visit we received contradictory information about what kinds of comparative data were available on teaching. We note that these issues were also raised in the report of the 1997 External Review Committee: "the external reviewers were not provided with data from the electronic evaluation forms (are aggregated and comparative data generated?)" (p. 9).

It is also not clear whether the Chair's and Associate Chair's assessment of teaching is multi-faceted. That is, do the Chair and Associate Chair draw on additional sources of information such as course syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, classroom observations of teaching, etc.? Such data can be extremely important for a variety of reasons including the following: it can help the Chair and Associate Chair to anticipate teaching problems and offer teaching support (especially important in the case of apprentice teachers/graduate teaching assistants); it can provide support for teaching award nominations; and it provides an important component of the dossier of new PhDs. In other words, the collection of this information should not be seen as monitory or divisive, but as supporting the work and aspirations of the Department's teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That future external review teams be provided with data from student evaluations of teaching.
2. That the Department collect data from the student evaluation forms that would allow for comparative assessments of teaching and that the comparative data also be provided to future external review teams.
3. That the Department establish multi-faceted procedures for evaluating teaching.

Evaluation of course offerings and delivery system, undergraduate program

Our assessment of the materials available to us indicates that the Department is offering rigorous and innovative courses in both traditional and emerging areas of the discipline. It is certainly the case that the new hires are bringing new methodologies and texts to the classroom. These complement the already innovative work of established faculty members. We find it curious, however, that the intellectual energy and excitement evident in the Department's course descriptions are not reflected in their course titles. Proposed revisions to the undergraduate program (which are discussed below) retain highly traditional, period-based course designations. While we understand the

Department's desire for course titles that are loose and generic enough to allow for multiple interpretations by different instructors, we would nonetheless encourage the Department to revisit and update the titles.

We want to emphasize that the question of course titles goes beyond "window dressing." In both its current configuration and its proposed reconfiguration, the undergraduate curriculum appears to be heavily oriented toward traditional period designations and the traditional national literatures (i.e., British, American, Canadian). The proposed reconfiguration does not include a commitment to First Nations or South and East Asian North American literatures, in spite of the fact that these are the literatures of significant communities in British Columbia. Nor does the revised configuration include a commitment to other major world literatures in English (Nigerian, South African, Indian – to name only three) or to theoretical perspectives. It might be argued that these areas are regularly included in the teaching schedule in practice; however, clarity of commitment is important.

A major strength of the Undergraduate program is its continuing commitment to the small tutorial or seminar format and to small upper-level classes. Currently lower-division (100- and 200-level) courses are 3 credit courses taught as 2-hour lectures and 1-hour tutorials (capped at 17 students). Upper-division (currently mostly 300-level) courses are 4 credit courses taught either as seminars capped at 23 students, or in a 2-hour lecture plus 2-hour seminar format (again with the seminar capped at 23). This course delivery system provides, for the most part, an unquestionably high quality of undergraduate education—but it is not the only effective pedagogy, as members of the 1997 External Review team pointed out (see p. 11 of their report). We are concerned that proposed revisions of the undergraduate program still take the tutorial as the primary organizing unit, effectively organizing courses around multiples of 17 or 23 (or 15, 30 and 17—in 100, 300, and 400-level courses—when the writing intensive requirement takes effect).

We also have some concerns about the 4 credit system at the upper levels. It is not at all clear to us that the subject matter of the courses cannot be taught in the "normal" 3 credit hours. We believe that moving to a 3 credit system for the 300- and 400-level courses would have at least two benefits: it would allow students to take more courses and thereby increase the "breadth" of their education; and it would allow students greater flexibility in course selection (it is difficult to schedule 2-hour blocks).

More importantly, however, we have serious concerns about the sustainability of the Department's current tutorial and seminar system. These concerns are discussed in detail below, and we will only note here that the entire system is unusually and, to our minds, unfairly dependent on graduate teaching assistants.

An additional problem that was brought to our attention by the Associate Chair is related to the Department's reduced ability (based on its complement which fell from 37 in 1997 to 32 in 2003/04) to offer a full range of courses each academic year. Many of the courses that are scheduled fill to capacity within hours and some students purportedly

have difficulty fulfilling their program requirements. There is anecdotal evidence that some students have had to delay graduation for this reason. (Real data on this issue has been increasingly difficult to gather because of the limitations of the PeopleSoft/SIMS enrolment management systems.) A related issue is the Department's reliance on Distance Education courses to supplement their offerings each term. While we are convinced that these courses, which are designed by faculty members, are of a high quality and serve an important function for a small group of students who are unable to travel to the campus, we are concerned that the overall percentage of English department enrolments in these courses is high (12% of total enrolments) and that these students have little or no contact with faculty members (the courses are taught by Tutor Markers, primarily M.A. students, who are supervised by a faculty member).

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That the Department clarify its commitment to theoretical approaches and to world literatures in English in its course titles;
5. That all undergraduate courses in the Department of English should be 3-credit courses;
6. That the University, working with Departments, seek ways to improve the capacity of the PeopleSoft/SIMS system to gather course registration data;
7. That enrolments in the Department's Distance Education courses not exceed 10% of total enrolments and that the Department provide increased contact with continuing faculty members for distance education students.

Proposed Revisions to the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

As we mentioned earlier in the report, the Committee is concerned by the lack of finalized and departmentally-approved plans for revisions to its undergraduate and graduate programs. Our comments are, therefore, on the plans the Department Committees intend to bring before the Department.

Revisions to the Undergraduate program

As we note above, the current model of using a combination of seminars and lectures at all levels across the undergraduate curriculum is strong and the undergraduate students express a very high level of satisfaction with the kind of instruction they are receiving. The Department's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) is presently preparing a proposal for restructuring its undergraduate program that will build on the strength of this model while attending to changing University requirements and the demands of its own students.

The most urgent external pressure will come in September 2006 when the University will require all undergraduate students to take at least 6 credit hours of writing intensive courses, meaning that the English Department will need to provide a larger number of seats at the lower division and upper division to accommodate its Majors and Minors. The Department has decided to meet this requirement by making all of its first year

courses writing intensive and by introducing 400-level writing-intensive seminar courses with an enrollment of 17.

The upper division requirement will only be met if they are able to introduce a series of 400-level courses (which they currently do not have). The Department has become aware that the faculty-student ratio in upper-level courses is low compared to other departments in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and that they have the highest number of turn-aways from their courses. Their proposed revision will enable the introduction of 400-level courses by reducing the number of 300-level courses while enlarging individual classes to about 30 students.

These revisions seem to us both sensible and workable. We strongly agree with the Department's plan to add a 400-series of courses to their undergraduate program, following the practice of other faculties at SFU and at other universities in Canada. But as we noted above, we recommend that UCC examine its practice of offering fewer courses with such long credit hours. For example, undergraduates are current taking 8 courses valued at 32 credit hours when they could well be taking 10 courses at 30 credit hours, enabling a broader range of coverage.

We also agree with their rational in proposing broad surveys at the 300 level with more specialized courses at the 400 level. But this distinction is not recognized in their course titles. It would be useful to draw attention to the innovative approaches actually being given in these courses but not indicated by the course titles.

As the 1997 External Review did, we recommend that the Department continue to monitor its use of sessionals and to reduce their reliance on sessional teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. That the Department continue to monitor its use of sessionals and reduce its reliance on sessional teaching.

Revisions to the Graduate Program

The Department has addressed important aspects of the MA program and the Department's administration should be commended for its desire to continue to improve both the MA and PhD programs. It was our impression that the graduate director is working very hard to make significant changes. Nonetheless, the 1997 External Review suggested that the Department was in a position to sort out its graduate programs. In 2000, the Department had 12 PhD students. In 2005 they have close to 21 PhD students. Yet the requirements for PhD students still remain unclear.

Written material and data relating to both the MA and PhD programs were at times piecemeal and incomplete and raised questions in our minds about the planning process as a whole. Without clearer data on their graduate students it would seem difficult for them to engage in adequate planning and assessment of their progress from one year to

the next. The committee recommends that the graduate chair and secretary keep more adequate data about post-degree employment and continuing study.

From what we could gather, the Department is still at a very preliminary stage in thinking about how to revise the PhD program in terms of the number of required courses and the nature of the field exams. Doctoral programs elsewhere in the country regularly require a greater number of courses and until this department raises the number of courses required students will be at a disadvantage when completing with students from other programs. Until there is a clearer sense of how to adequately address the problematic relationship between workload and course requirements, we recommend that they not further expand the doctoral program.

Our major concern is that the teaching loads of the graduate students are seriously impeding their progress toward completion of the degree. We are told that there are increasing numbers of MA students who take only 1 course per term rather than two. The number of graduate students admitted to the program should not be increased simply to meet the increased teaching needs of the Department.

Moreover, the scheduling of graduate courses in the evening from 4:30 – 8:30 seems to suggest that the graduate component of their program is serving the needs of undergraduate teaching. We strongly recommend that graduate courses be timetabled at various times during the day and not only in the evening.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. That the graduate chair and secretary collect and regular solicit detailed data about post-degree employment and continuing study.
10. That graduate courses be timetabled at various times during the day and not only in the evening.

Evaluation of the Department's teaching resources

An assessment of the Department's teaching resources must take a number of factors into account. These include recent and projected increases in undergraduate enrolment (19% in the last five years with similar increases anticipated for the next five); the complement of continuing faculty and their normal teaching load; the Department's access to and use of supplemental forms of contract labour (sessionals and graduate teaching assistants); the Department's current commitment to the tutorial/seminar system; and the availability of flexible classroom space. A related factor is the Department's desire to improve the graduate program, including time to completion rates.

2003/04 data (Appendix 14 of the Self Study) indicates that the Department currently comprises 32 continuing faculty members with an additional 2.5 "budgeted" members. The current complement of 32 includes 7.5 Professors, 10 Associate Professors, 9 Assistant Professors, and 5.5 Lecturers. The normal annual course load is 4 for the professorial staff and 8 for lecturers. Undergraduate enrolments reached 7,198 in 2004.

As even a cursory examination of these figures will suggest, the Department cannot support its current tutorial and seminar system using only continuing faculty.¹ Nor is this system sustainable with the additional teaching capacity provided by the Department's normal complement of sessionals (the Department's 2004/05 dependence on sessionals is unusually low).

In fact, the current tutorial (sections capped at 17) and seminar (sections capped at 23) system is made possible only by extensive—and, to our mind, exploitative—use of graduate teaching assistants. As indicated in Appendix 14 of the Self Study, in 2003/04 continuing faculty members were responsible for 61.4% of primary weekly student contact hours (lectures), but only 31.2% of secondary weekly student contact hours (tutorials/seminars). Teaching assistants, on the other hand, were responsible for 40.9% of secondary weekly student contact hours. As the 1997 External Review Team noted, the Department responded to “recent budgetary erosion” by giving teaching assistants “three rather than two tutorials to lead,” a TA teaching load which continues today. The responsibilities of graduate student TAs teaching in the lower division include a minimum of 6 or 7 contact hours (2 lecture hours plus 3 tutorial hours plus 1 or 2 office hours), marking and grading for 51 students, and course preparation.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough that this is an unacceptable teaching load for graduate students. How can the Department solve this problem, which has now been ongoing for more than seven years? A number of possibilities suggest themselves: the University and the Faculty of Arts can increase the complement of continuing faculty; the Department can raise the enrolment caps on its tutorials and seminars (assuming the availability of suitable classrooms); the Department can investigate other ways of offering courses (again, assuming the availability of suitable classrooms); the Department can hire (a lot) more sessionals; continuing faculty members can increase their teaching loads. Presumably, some combination of all of the above will be required.

As the 1997 External Review Team pointed out, “the average undergraduate course teaching and marking load [is] low by comparison with any peer departments in Canada” (p. 5). This remains the case. The overall professorial teaching load in the Department of English at SFU is relatively light in comparison with that of English faculty in other universities, including major research-intensive universities, a “lightness” that is not, for the most part, offset by heavy graduate supervisory responsibilities. Is this a reason to increase the load? Not in itself. It is widely acknowledged that teaching, and especially writing intensive teaching, is most effective in smaller classes, and it must certainly be the case that small class sizes contribute to SFU's ability to recruit and retain excellent young colleagues. However, the Department must do some hard thinking about its responsibilities to not only its undergraduate students but also its graduate students. The current situation not only is unsustainable, it is untenable.

¹ If every member of the continuing faculty was available to teach a full course load (no one on sabbatical or other form of leave, no one seconded to other units or receiving teaching release for heavy administrative responsibilities), this would make available 164 courses. If the Department could not draw on other forms of contract labour (sessionals, TAs), each course would be capped at approximately 44 students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. That the Department immediately reduce the teaching load of its graduate teaching assistants without reducing its financial support of graduate students.

The Department's MA and PhD Programs

As our comments above suggest, we have serious concerns about the degree to which the MA and PhD Programs appear to be designed and structured primarily to support the undergraduate teaching mission. As one young colleague said to us, "The graduate program was invented to get TAs. That's the reality of it around here." A graduate student also commented that "We're cheap labour." While these remarks might appear cynical, there are numerous indications, as we discussed several times already, that the undergraduate teaching mission takes clear precedence over the graduate program.

At the time of the Department's last external review in 1997, the MA was described as the "core" of the graduate program with the PhD program in "transition." The last external review team recommended that the Department "concentrate on formulating a well-focused PhD programme in two or three areas" and that it "direct its hiring over the next few years with these in mind." Since then, the PhD program has doubled in size from 11 students in 2000/01 (we don't have figures for 1997) to 21 students in 2004/05. In spite of this increase, there is little evidence that the PhD program has received the kind of shaping and *planned* growth recommended by the 1997 reviewers.

In contrast, concerns about teaching load aside for a moment, the MA program has received sustained and productive attention from the last and current Graduate Chairs who are to be commended for their efforts in this regard. The redirection of MA students from thesis to course-based degrees and the elimination of MA field examinations are significant and important. These changes bring the Department's MA program in line with those of other major universities, and they have also enabled the introduction of a wider range of graduate courses. Time to completion of the MA program has also improved, though more gains can be made here if TA teaching loads are reduced, as we recommend. The MA in Print Culture has succeeded in bringing the Department's MA program to national attention.

The current Graduate Chair is now turning her attention to the PhD program, and she has wisely decided to slow admissions until the mandate of this program is clearer. She is also, and correctly, concerned that the Department's untenured professors not be overburdened with graduate supervisions while they establish their research and teaching careers.

Two areas of particular concern in the PhD program, which we also address below, are the number of required courses and the nature of the field examinations. The program currently requires three courses in addition to ENGL 810 and 811, as opposed to the four to six courses common in other doctoral programs. The current structure of the field

examinations seems to have the disadvantages both of traditional comprehensive examinations and of approaches focused more closely on the dissertation, with none of their advantages. Increasing the number of required courses might obviate the need for the second field examination, and help to improve the time to completion of the PhD. Having said that, it is admittedly difficult to fully assess the time to completion. Department figures suggest that the average time to complete the PhD is 18.85 semesters (based on graduations between 2000 and 2004). This is somewhat higher than the national average of about 5 ½ years. However, a complicating factor is the withdrawal rate which seems very high. Figures supplied by the Faculty of Graduate Studies suggest that the withdrawal rate for PhD students in English is 61%. However, since this is based on figures going back to 1985, it is difficult to know how much of a problem this is currently.

It is also difficult to assess the success of the MA and PhD programs in placing students post-degree. The data provided to us was incomplete, as we have said. Nor were we provided with a list of graduate student conference presentations and publications, or with data about the geographic areas from which the Department attracts PhD students. There is a clear need for better and more sustained data management in the graduate program as a whole. On the positive side, the PhD students we met (a total of ten over two meetings) were unanimously enthusiastic about the quality of their professors, the range of courses and approaches available to them, and the climate of the Department. At least two PhD students chose the program at SFU at some financial cost to themselves because they wanted to work with a particular professor. The financial cost was significant in more than one sense. The funding offers were lower than those from other universities but, even more significantly, they were less secure. It is imperative that the Department find ways to offer funding packages that ensure funding over four years. We also suggest that the Department consider diverting some of its Messenger endowment funds to help support graduate student travel to conference and research libraries.

The current Graduate Chair has done an excellent job of making a re-examination of the PhD program a priority. However, since her term expires at the end of this year, the challenge for the Department will be to maintain the momentum she has established.

The Department's plan to increase scholarship funding for graduate students and reduce their teaching duties.

The Department is on the right track in wanting the TAs to have a meaningful award component, as is common in other research-intensive universities. The Committee had discussions with the Chair, Graduate Chair, Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Student Caucus about the Department's proposed plan to reduce graduate students' teaching duties by increasing scholarship funding. But we agreed with the Graduate Student Caucus and the Dean who did not believe this plan would remedy the problem which is really one of teaching workload.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the teaching assistants in the Department are consistently working many more hours than the Time Use Guidelines permit. As we have said, the current amount of teaching required of graduate students significantly impedes their ability to complete their degrees in a fashion similar to other graduate programs. In circumstances where most of their energy and a lot of their time are devoted to the preparation and delivery of undergraduate classes, they have very little energy left to bring to their graduate seminars.

The timing of the graduate courses from 4:30 – 8:30 in the evening is symbolic of where the Department's priorities are with regard to their graduate students. As the graduate students we spoke with repeatedly said, their responsibilities as teaching assistants have taken precedence over their graduate educations.

The funding of graduate student research is nonetheless a crucial issue. We recommend that the Department put in place a guaranteed funding package for its MA and PhD students. To make the PhD program competitive with other programs in Canada, for example, PhD students should be guaranteed a minimum level of funding for at least 4 years. The Department might consider, in addition, directing a portion of the Messenger Endowment into funding available, on a competitive basis, to PhD students delivering papers at conferences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. That the Department put in place a guaranteed minimum level of funding package for its MA and PhD students.

DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION

Members of the Department of English have a genuine desire to contribute to its effective administration. Some of the most burdensome service in the Department (that of the Associate Chair and Graduate Chair) is being carried by faculty members at the mid-point of their careers. We encourage more senior members of the Department to protect, whenever possible, those members at mid-career from long-term commitments to service. That said, the Committee is concerned by the fact that neither the Undergraduate nor the Graduate Programs had been fully reviewed nor had proposals for program revisions been fully developed and approved by the Department prior to the arrival of the External Review Committee.

We were also concerned that some of the information provided in the self-study was frankly inaccurate. For example, a faculty member with whom we spoke was eager to let us know that he had not in fact published 2 books but instead was working on 2 book projects. Moreover, as we said earlier, crucial data (including time to completion of graduate students, number and size of recent graduate courses, employment statistics for recent MAs and PhDs) was not provided to the Committee in advance of our visit. We were grateful to the support staff who willingly and quickly provided us with that data at our request.

The lack of reliable data suggests a carelessness about the attention paid to the Department's programs as they stand and that the proposed revisions have no firm foundation. We recommend that the Department implement immediately a program of sustained planning. For example, the Department must maintain accurate records about its programs so that Undergraduate and Graduate Programs have a basis upon which to make decisions. Prior to proposing any curricular revisions, committees must avail themselves of data from other universities in Canada and the United States.

In their Self-Study, the Department reports that, "[f]or the last few years, virtually every Department member who is not on leave, seconded, or on joint appointment serves on a Department committee" and that many members also serve on various university committees. Although this is itself laudable, the Department might want to consider that in many other universities in Canada, members regularly serve on several Departmental committees in addition to Faculty and University Committees and service to the Profession. A good Department is one in which faculty are regularly available to contribute to the life of the Department as well as to scholarly exchange and teaching. We recognize that the semester system means that, unlike most other Departments in Canada, members may not use the summer as their research term. Nonetheless, measures must be put in place to ensure ongoing and fairly distributed service to the smooth running and regular review of the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. That the Department implement immediately a program of sustained planning.

THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The External Review Committee was asked to assess whether the environment in the Department of English is conducive to the attainments of the objectives of the Department. For the most part, faculty and undergraduate students report an unusual level of satisfaction with the current working environment in the Department of English. Following years of significant trouble, the environment is, for the most part, friendly, collegial and supportive. We do have some concerns, however, about the following groups.

Administrative Assistants The Committee found it unusual that the Associate Chair and the Graduate Chair do not have offices in close proximity to their administrative assistants. We encourage the Department to consider reconfiguring the space to make this connection more likely. Moreover, we encourage the Associate Chair and Graduate Chair to make a point of staying in regular contact with their Department administrators. Clear direction from faculty members is always appreciated from members of the support staff and is essential to the efficient running of any department and may alleviate some of the difficulties and tensions reported by some members of the support staff.

Graduate Students: The graduate students reported very high levels of satisfaction about the instruction and supervision they were receiving. Their concerns were limited to issues around teaching workload and funding, issues we address (at length and repeatedly) elsewhere in this report.

Lecturers: We encourage the Department to develop guidelines to assist lecturers in understanding what is meant by the requirement that they maintain currency in research. We also support the lecturers' request that their courses be timetabled so as to accommodate the taking of their annual vacation entitlement in a one-month period. We encourage the Department to develop a list-serve to facilitate direct communication with its lecturers.

New Faculty Members: The Committee recognizes the significant energy and promise that new faculty members have brought to the Department and encourages the Department to assign (in consultation with both members) mentors to each of them. We encourage the Chair to have annual meetings to assess progress toward tenure.

Retired Faculty members: We heard serious concerns from 2 retired faculty members and 1 member about to retire that they felt entirely unwelcome and unrecognized in and by the Department. The Committee was not able to ascertain to what extent these feelings were related to the recent troubles in the Department. But we do suggest that, given the relative youth of most current members of the Department, it might be worthwhile to draw on the greater experience and wisdom of those members of the Department who, although retired, would be willing to continue to offer their services to the Department. Providing access to photocopying and mailing privileges would be an inexpensive and symbolically important way to recognize these former members of the Department. The Action Committee might also consider inviting emeritus professors to occasionally give papers in the Department.

Support Staff: Some members of the support staff asked the committee directly for a formal review of their operations. We detected various levels of discontent, but enough to suggest that the support staff is not currently being used to the best of its potential. We recommend that the support staff in the Department be formally reviewed and offered advice on best practices for distributing workload. No one reported requiring additional staff or longer working hours. But clearly the staff could be working in a friendlier and more efficient environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. That the support staff in the Department be formally reviewed and offered advice on best practices for distributing workload.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That future external review teams be provided with data from student evaluations of teaching.
2. That the Department collect data from the student evaluation forms that would allow for comparative assessments of teaching and that the comparative data also be provided to future external review teams. That the Department establish multi-faceted procedures for evaluating teaching.
3. That the Department clarify its commitment to theoretical approaches and to world literatures in English in its course titles.
4. That all undergraduate courses in the Department of English should be 3-credit courses.
5. That the University, working with departments, seek ways to improve the capacity of the PeopleSoft/SIMS system to gather course registration data.
6. That enrolments in the Department's Distance Education courses not exceed 10% of total enrolments and that the Department seek ways to provide increased contact with continuing faculty members for distance education students.
7. That UCC examine its practice of offering fewer courses with such long credit hours.
8. That the Department continue to monitor its use of sessionals and reduce its reliance on sessional teaching.
9. That the Graduate Chair and secretary keep more adequate data about post-degree employment and continuing study.
10. That graduate courses be timetabled at various times during the day and not only in the evening.
11. That the Department immediately reduce the teaching load of its graduate teaching assistants without reducing its financial support of graduate students.
12. That the Department put in place a guaranteed minimum level of funding package for its MA and PhD students.
13. That the Department implement immediately a program of sustained planning.
14. That the support staff in the Department be formally reviewed and offered advice on best practices for distributing workload.