

School of Religion will be viewed as a case where change came with opportunities and the end result was an enhanced quality of its academic programs sustained by its excellent profile of research and scholarship.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan P. C.
Chair, Sena

Committee

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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Gordon Hall, Room 425

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

**REPORT OF THE REVIEW TEAM
FOR THE
INTERNAL ACADEMIC REVIEW
OF
QUEEN'S SCHOOL OF RELIGION
THEOLOGY PROGRAMS**

For

REPORT OF THE REVIEW TEAM FOR

site classes and on-line modules) webcasting of courses, teleconferencing and video

REPORT OF THE REVIEW TEAM FOR THE INTERNAL ACADEMIC REVIEW OF QUEEN'S SCHOOL OF RELIGION THEOLOGY PROGRAMS

The Review Team

Members of the IAR Review Team were confirmed by a letter from Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) Robert Silverman, dated 13 December 2010. Initial members included the following.

- Dr. LeRoy Whitehead, Faculty of Education (Chair)
- Professor Nick Bala, Faculty of Law
- Dr. Caroline-Isabelle Caron, Department of History
- Dr. Kathleen Norman, Department of Rehabilitation Therapy
- Ms Linda Horton, Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)
- Mr. Ian Fanning, Department of Religious Studies
- Ms Mary Smida, Department of History

However, because of unforeseen circumstances, Dr. Caron, Dr. Norman and Mr. Fanning retired from the team before the team began substantive work. The two retiring faculty members were replaced by Dr. Jacalyn Duffin, Hannah Chair of the History of Medicine, and Dr. Katharine Smithrim of the Faculty of Education. Because of the length of the review process, Ms Smida graduated from her program and relocated shortly before the team completed its work. For most of the team's life span, therefore, the team consisted of four faculty members, one staff member and one student, as follows.

- Dr. LeRoy Whitehead, Faculty of Education (Chair)
- Professor Nick Bala, Faculty of Law
- Dr. Jacalyn Duffin, Hannah Chair of the History of Medicine
- Dr. Katharine Smithrim, Faculty of Education
- Ms Linda Horton, Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)
- Ms Mary Smida, Department of History

We trust that the word 'normally' found in the Senate document description of the composition of the Review Team will cover this situation of the team being short of one student member, and short both student members briefly near the end of its work.

Mandate of the Review Team

Initially, the IAR Review Team found the scope of its mandate to be unclear, for two reasons. The first was the negotiations then taking place between Queen's Theological College (operating under the identity of Queen's School of Religion) and Queen's University for the purpose of materially changing the nature of the relationship between the College and the University. At the time the unit self study document was written, it was not clear what the final outcome of those negotiations would be. Hence, the self study document was somewhat vague about the nature of the negotiations and what the resulting relationship would be. That lack of clarity was confusing for the Review Team. Second, the team was not made aware initially that the review covered only the programs in Theology, and that the Religion programs had been reviewed earlier. This also led to some confusion at the beginning of our review process. However, this was eventually clarified in discussions with personnel of Queen's School of Religion and the Office of the Provost. It is our understanding that this Internal Academic Review process covers only the programs in Theology, and does not include programs in Religion.

Concurrent Accreditation Review

In addition to the above, the Theology degree programs were undergoing a cyclical external accreditation review by the Board of Commissioners of the Commission on Accreditation of the Association of Theological Schools at the same time the Internal Academic Review was scheduled. The Office of the Provost had agreed to use the self study materials submitted to the accreditation board in lieu of the Unit Self Study required for the Internal Academic Review. The evaluation team sent by the accreditation board, by mutual agreement, also served as the external panel for the Internal Academic Review, and a copy of their site visit report was provided to the IAR Review Team. This arrangement worked well, with one exception: our Internal Academic Review time line had to be altered (i.e., lengthened considerably) to coincide with the timing of the external accreditation review. There was a delay of several months while we waited for the external evaluation team to make its visit, and an additional delay while we waited to receive the final report of the external team and the final decision of the accreditation body.

One issue that will need to be dealt with in future if similar arrangements are to be made for joint accreditation/ internal review visiting panels for professional programs is whether the visiting panel report to the accrediting body may be used as soon as the panel submits its report to the accrediting body, or whether the report may not be used until the accrediting body finalizes its accreditation decision. In this case, the Principal/Head of Queen's School of Religion asked the IAR Review Team to wait until the accreditation body had rendered its accreditation decision. The Review Team complied with this request, but in doing so added several months to the time frame. (These extensions of the Internal Academic Review timelines are part of the reason for some of the retirements from the IAR Review Team.) As it happens, in this case the accrediting body did make one important change from the recommendations of its evaluation team: the evaluation team had recommended renewal of accreditation for a five year period, but the decision of the accrediting body was for an eight year renewal.

The Basis of This Report

Objectives The programs currently offered appear to be consistent with Queen's mission and the academic plans of Queen's School of Religion, including its teaching and research strengths, the relation of the unit to other academic units and the standards, educational goals and learning outcomes and objectives of the degrees/diplomas/certificates. The external accreditation evaluation team found that "for the most part, broadly communicated purpose and direction appear to be creating a cohesive institutional character at QSR." (p. 3) The IAR Review Team was impressed with the intense levels of activity in the unit in each of the following areas: strategic planning, administrative reorganization, curriculum review and renewal, the move to reintegrate Queen's Theological College with Queen's University, and the adoption of the Queen's School of Religion as a new identity that have taken place over the last decade. All of these actions speak to the concern of the unit to keep curriculum updated and provide more relevant programs while providing a broader base of student services and securing a stable financial/resource base for the programs under review.

Admission Requirements The admission requirements for the various programs appear to be appropriate and effective for the learning objectives of the institution and the programs to ensure the appropriate quality of student applicants. The external accreditation evaluation team found that "the admissions policies and procedures of the institution are clearly laid out and followed and appear to be yielding academically-capable students who are eager to learn and serve. Distinctions between admissions criteria for the MDiv and BTh programs are clearly articulated in promotional documents." (p.9) The external accreditation team also expressed some concern about the classroom ratio of MDiv and BTh students. (p. 9)

Clearly, the key issue with regard to admissions is a history of declining enrolments in the Master of Divinity programs (which are preparation for the clergy). This decline is not unique to Queen's, but appears to be the result of a general decline in religiosity in the general public and the decline in church attendance and the number of congregations for many faiths, most significantly for the Queen's School of Religion, the United Church of Canada. The unit has already deleted some programs because of low enrolments, and has tried a number of strategies (as described in the self study document) to increase enrolments, but so far to little avail. Queen's School of Religion is to be commended for the bold steps it has taken over the past decade to reverse the trend of declining enrolments; however it appears continued vigilance in this area will be needed. Queen's School of Religion may have to undertake even bolder actions to somehow widen their catchment area for these programs. Given the School's stated concern about the relative isolation of Queen's campus, it may be necessary to take the programs to where the numbers of potential students are, either through offering on-site programs in metropolitan areas, through on-line courses, or perhaps through a "blended" model offering a combination of on-campus or on-site meetings and on-line modules, web-casting and/or teleconferencing. There is technology for these approaches, and there is expertise as to how this could be done and has been done by other departments and faculties at Queen's. An aggressive funding campaign to provide a higher level of financial aid to full-time students might also be considered to bring more full-time students to campus.

Curriculum As noted above, the structure and curriculum of the programs have recently undergone a thorough review and re-mapping. The curriculum seems appropriate for its discipline specific outcomes and objectives. Queen's School of Religion is to be commended for its considerable efforts in this regard over the past decade. The renewal of accreditation for an

However, the external accreditation evaluation team found that “there are no identifiable assessments of the curriculum or even of the several components of the curriculum as such. This absence means that there is no overall reflection on the suitability and effect and its several elements.” (pp. 6-7) With regard to evaluation of the programs as a whole, the external accreditation evaluation team found that “actual educational assessment of the theological programs appears less developed than planning procedures. Information is gathered primarily through entrance and exit questionnaires. Student learning outcomes for theology programs have recently been identified (2010), but not all the accompanying assessment tools that that will be used to measure outcomes.... The team encourages the school to prioritize educational assessment as an integral dimension of its comprehensive institutional planning and evaluation.” (pp.3-4) The IAR Review Team suggests that expertise exists at Queen’s in program evaluation which the School could draw upon.

Teaching The mode of delivery and standards of instruction seem appropriate for the School’s current on-campus approach. The Theology programs offer a very limited number of on-line courses. In light of declining enrolments and the need to attract more students, the School may wish to consider increasing the number of on-line courses and/or “blended” courses (in which a combination of on-campus or on-site class meetings and on-line instruction is used) in either synchronous or asynchronous format. Such an approach might be especially useful in part-time programs. Webcasting and teleconferencing/videoconferencing might also be assessed for their possible usefulness. Again, there is experience and expertise in these approaches in other units at Queen’s. The external accreditation evaluation team observed, “There is apparently no consistent distance education to improve the global outreach of the QSR courses or programs, and QSR may wish to explore the possibility of using distance learning tools to improve their global involvement.” (p. 5)

Evaluation of Student Progress

bodies. However, these programs prepare graduates specifically for employment by the United Church of Canada. Many, if not most, of the students seek ordination to the ministry, but those who do not use their preparation in other ways. Queen's School of Religion does not offer a formal career placement service, but does keep in constant contact with the United Church of Canada. This contact, along with periodic accreditation reviews by the Association of Theological Schools, helps to ensure that the clergy preparation programs are producing graduates that are competent for the clerical role as it evolves. The key societal issue here is a

theology programs, courses and curricula over the past decade. This exercise included the discontinuation of four of its under-enrolled theology programs.

- Both the School and Queen's Library System are to be commended for their cooperation in significantly improving the Library's theology holdings over the past decade.

Key Areas of Concern

- Enrolment in the Theology programs has been steadily declining over the past number of years. Commendable efforts to stabilize or reverse this trend have not produced results.
- At the same time, outside funding from the United Church of Canada has also been declining.
- While the School has in place programs for assessment of individual student learning outcomes, it needs to put in place more systematic evaluation processes for its curricula and programs.
- Efforts to diversify the student body have produced some results. The School would like to do more but feels the isolated nature of the campus militates against this.
- Theological Hall requires a lot of maintenance that has been deferred.

Key Opportunities

- Queen's School of Religion may wish to consider and evaluate the possibility of moving beyond the Kingston campus through greater use of distance learning. The technology and expertise is readily available at Queen's University as various faculties are already broadening their reach through the use of these technologies. Possibilities include on-site courses, online courses, "blended" courses (a combination of on-campus or on-site classes and on-line modules) webcasting of courses, teleconferencing and video conferencing. If successful, the outcome might be increased enrolments as well as a more diverse student body.