

**Academic Program Review (APR) of the Department of
Classics, Memorial University (MUN)
February 27-March 2, 2013**

APR Panel Members:

Dr. Michael Deal, Professor, Department of Archaeology, MUN (Panel Chair)
Dr. John Buffinga, Associate Professor, Department of German and Russian, MUN
Dr. James Murray, Dean of Arts, University of New Brunswick (Fredericton)
Dr. Frances Pownall, Professor and Undergraduate Chair, University of Alberta

1. Outline of the Panel's Activities

On day one, the Panel members went to a dinner meeting with the Associate V.P. (Academic), Dr. Doreen Neville, Dean of Arts, Dr. Lynne Phillips, and APR Coordinator, Kim Myrick. This meeting gave the Panel members an opportunity to get acquainted and discuss some of their initial concerns from the Classics Self-Study document with members of the MUN Administration.

On day two, the Panel convened at 9:00 am in Room A5014 for an organizational meeting with the APR Coordinator. This was followed by a visit to the Classics Department where Dr. Tana Allen (Department Head) provided a tour and overview of the Department's resources and space requirements. The remainder of the morning was spent in interviews with faculty members Dr. Kathryn Simonsen, Dr. Craig Maynes (Undergraduate Advisor) and Dr. Brad Levett (General Editor, *Mouseion*), and the Department Graduate Committee (Drs. Allen, Simonsen and Roman). At lunch the Panel was joined by Dr. Allen, Dr. Levett and graduate student, Martina Krskova. Lunch was followed by meetings with the entire department, nine undergraduate students in two groups, and the Administrative Secretary, Cathy Kieley. Most of the undergraduate students are also members of the Classics Student Society. Finally, the Panel members visited the Digital Language Centre (DLC) where Karin Thomeier gave a presentation on the Centre's services and Classics resources. From 4:30 to 6:00 pm the Panel conferred on their findings from day two.

Day three began with another organizational meeting at 9:00 am in Room A5014. The remainder of the morning consisted of interviews with Dr. Allen and Dr. Milo Nikolic, and a visit to the QEII Library, where Chris Dennis (Collections) provided a tour of the stacks and review of the Library's Classics holdings. The Panel had a working lunch from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm. The afternoon consisted of interviews with Dr. Arden Williams (Sessional Instructor), Martina Krskova (graduate student) and Dr. Luke Roman (Graduate Coordinator), and exit meetings to share preliminary findings with Dr. Lynne

Phillips and Dr. Tana Allen. The Site Visit Itinerary also called for an exit meeting with the entire Department, but because this was not included in the “Revised Procedures for the Review of Units and Programs”, the Panel did not feel that it was necessary. The Panel conferred from 4:30-5:30 pm and reconvened for a working dinner at 7:00 pm.

2. Brief Overview of the Department of Classics

The Department of Classics at Memorial University is a young department, in that all six of the current full-time faculty members have joined since 2002. Because they are a young group, much of their time and energy has been directed towards rebuilding the department, developing new courses and meeting tenure requirements. The original undergraduate and graduate programs were developed to fit the profile of former faculty members, and this has created certain problems with delivering these programs. The undergraduate program was revised in 2006-2007 and they are currently working on revisions to the graduate program.

All of the current faculty members have active research programs and good university service records. However, a fairly demanding teaching load for a department in which all faculty members are junior and in the process of rebuilding their academic unit has somewhat impacted their ability to conduct research and prepare manuscripts for publication. Faculty members take pride in the fact that their department is currently the home of *Mouseion*, a journal for the Classical Association of Canada.

The current undergraduate program follows two broad categories (or streams): Classical Civilization and Greek and Latin Languages. Undergraduate enrollments are very good, with 700-850 students taking Classics courses each year. According to the Classics Self-Study document, the vast majority are enrolled in Civilization courses (82%). Last year there were 33 Majors, 26 Minors and four Honours students. The Honours degree requires an additional 18 credits hours (six courses). Honours students have four program options; General Honours, Joint Honours, Honours in Greek and Roman Studies and Joint Honours in Greek and Roman Studies. Nine students have graduated with Honours in the last five years.

The existing graduate MA degree in Classics is officially a one year program, consisting of 18 credit hours (six courses) and a research essay or set of translation exams. Graduate support is provided through baseline funding from the School of Graduate Studies and Graduate Assistantships from the Dean of Arts Office. Additional funding is available through one-year *Mouseion* internships. Four students have entered the program since 2009 and all of them are near completion.

3. Departmental Strengths

The strengths of the Department of Classics are obvious. All of the faculty members express a high degree of satisfaction with their work environment. They genuinely enjoy

their work and like each other. The level of collegiality and harmony between colleagues is exceptional, and came out in the Self-Study document as well as in all of the interviews conducted with individual faculty members. Moreover, it was evident to the Panel that all faculty members felt that they were building something and working towards a common goal: to rebuild a Department from the ground up after 2003. It is also remarkable that the six full time faculty members are all under 45 years of age, and that they are all more or less at the same stage of their academic career. While three faculty members are tenured, the remaining three are still working towards tenure, but there is no evidence of hierarchical behavior or thinking. The Head of the Department, too, sees herself as a facilitator, as one who enables and expedites, rather than as Head in the traditional sense.

All the students we interviewed (nine undergraduates and one graduate) had nothing but praise for the positive learning environment that the department and its faculty are able to provide them. They perceive the faculty as truly caring, even nurturing, shepherding them through the learning process, but always trying to bring out the best in them in terms of applying academic rigor. The departmental library is their home and refuge, a place where they can study and research independently or work in groups. It has most of the published materials required by the undergraduate students, while the Queen Elizabeth II Library has an excellent collection of Classics resources to serve the needs of the graduate students and faculty. Students of Classics are also active socially with regular mixers, which further promote their cohesiveness as a group.

4. Challenges and Future Directions

The challenges that the Department of Classics faces are significant but manageable. Moreover, they are to a large extent a function of the very same things that constitute the Department's strength, namely the fact that all members of the unit are in the same age and career demographic. This irony was not lost on the Panel. In terms of rebuilding the Department, much energy is spent on making the existing program fit current realities of areas of expertise, program requirements and academic rigor, as well as relevance to their current students. Faculty members also have to focus on their own careers and navigate themselves and their colleagues through the Promotion and Tenure process without the benefit from the advice of more senior colleagues, which is often taken for granted in other units. Considering the lack of institutional memory in the Department, junior faculty has to seek advice from outside. This can be very challenging and is certainly very time-consuming. It may also lead to a kind of cocooning, a turning inward or detachment from the wider Faculty of Arts. Considering how much is expected of them as junior faculty members and the uniqueness of their situation, it is not surprising that the Department has not yet had the time to articulate clearly what it would like its academic strengths to be and to present these to the outside world. It is also clear to the Panel, though, that this discussion is happening between individual faculty members as reflected by the Self-Study document and in the interviews. However, it is also necessary for the Department to familiarize itself with the range of university services and expertise available outside the unit so as to build bridges, forge collaborations, and advance the

program. The Panel had the feeling that faculty members sometimes feel overwhelmed by the tasks put in front of them. A greater familiarity with campus resources would go a long way in resolving some of this, as would discussions with faculty members in other units.

The junior status of the faculty members is also reflected to a certain extent in the progression of the students through the program. In our interviews with students, it came to light that students perceive the regulations for the degrees in Classics as somewhat confusing, or that the optimal progression through the courses is either unclear or sometimes impossible due to course cancellations or limitations on the number of upper-level courses that can be offered in any given year. In some cases the rotation of courses was perceived as irregular or opaque. It was also noted that the Department suffers to some extent from lack of exposure or visibility. The public profile of the Department can be enhanced through community outreach initiatives, while information about course or program-related material can be disseminated through the Department website or the services provided by D2L.

In order to address these general concerns, the APR Panel suggests the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The Department should articulate in clearer terms what its strengths are and the process by which it envisions developing these strengths going forward. To say that the Department aims at a holistic approach may be too general in terms of an articulated vision. Since their resources are limited, faculty members may well have to acknowledge that they cannot possibly teach everything.

Recommendation 2: The Department should make a concerted effort (possibly with appropriate mentorship) to access existing campus resources and create links with other departments in order to pursue new initiatives more efficiently, such as setting up an overseas field school or study abroad program (possibly through the Harlow campus), publishing a departmental newsletter, or utilizing the existing e-class system (D2L) more effectively.

Recommendation 3: The Department should develop a more effective strategy for recruitment, community outreach, and publicity. Perhaps one faculty member could be assigned to oversee this area on an annual basis as part of his or her administrative duties. A larger public profile would greatly benefit the Department in terms of recruitment and visibility, and could easily be achieved through the development of a departmental newsletter, more effective use of the web, outreach to the community through widely-advertised public lectures of general interest, and faculty visits to local schools.

Recommendation 4: The Department should make more effective use of the departmental website in order to communicate more fully with the students, by providing, for example, fuller and clearer explanations of the program regulations and the sequencing and rotation of courses. Such a step will obviate the need for students to consume the professors' time in order to obtain basic information.

5. Undergraduate programs

The Classics Self Study document (p. 8) states that its “primary objective is to impart to our students a holistic understanding of the ancient world of Greece and Rome”, and in order to reach this objective the Department has worked diligently to include Classical Civilization courses and language courses in their undergraduate programs (Self-Study, p. 22). Moreover, the Department should be congratulated for its efforts over the last five years to revise its undergraduate curriculum with several important specific goals in mind: to ensure that it reflects the ongoing interests and research strengths of the present faculty, to seek to increase overall enrollment in the departmental programs, and to streamline the language portion of the curriculum. The Review Panel understands the importance of language courses to the overall academic enterprise of the Department of Classics, and recognizes the experience of smaller Classics programs across the country which successfully utilize a system of advanced language reading courses made up of senior undergraduates and graduates. In this context, we find that the term “piggy-backing” is unfortunate, since it suggests that some of the participants in such a course must necessarily receive something inadequate. We do not believe this need be the case.

In the general context of undergraduate studies, the Review Panel heard from both Faculty and Students that the department at times encounters difficulties providing a sufficient number of advanced (3000 level) courses for Major/Honours students, and that completion of language requirements often involves additional/overload teaching duties for faculty members. The following recommendations are offered in order to help alleviate these difficulties.

Recommendation 5: The Department should continue, but not enlarge, its first-year program as currently outlined, and seek to include a writing component (not to the level of a research and writing course) in large first-year classes as the graduate program begins to grow, and acquire more Graduate Assistantships.

Recommendation 6: The Department should reconsider its current use of the second-year curriculum and offer each year a smaller selection of its “introductory surveys” of classical civilization (Self-Study, p. 22; if that is the model it wishes to retain, though it may wish to reconsider its understanding of what the second year is meant to accomplish). The aim of this change would be to allow the Department to shift resources into the third year (e.g. teaching an alternating ancient history survey series), and thereby focusing departmental energies more closely on the needs of its own Major/Honours students, while not eliminating the possibility of students from other disciplines in these third-year courses.

Recommendation 7: The Department should realign and reduce the number of advanced language courses required for its Honours and Joint Honours degrees in Classics by 1) requiring the completion of six credit hours of each language (2200/3200; 2300/3300) in the second level (thereby eliminating the potential of having a student who can only work

in one language and needs 18 credit hours of courses in that language to complete the degree), and by 2) lowering the overall number of required language courses at the advanced level to nine credit hours beyond the second year in the Honours Program, and to six hours in Joint Honours. In circumstances where the courses are available in the timetable, the Department always has the option of encouraging students to do more language study than is required, and students have the option of doing more than is required. In addition, students could be allowed to count “extra” language courses as substitutes for required advanced Classics courses.

A review of the current (2012/2013) time-table of Classics courses raised additional questions for the Panel on a somewhat pedestrian level. For example, we were unsure why the Department had neglected to utilize the first teaching slot each day, while other teaching times held two or three departmental offerings (sometimes apparently competing offerings).

Recommendation 8: The Department should give serious consideration to using the first teaching time slot each day (9:00-10:00 am), in particular for those courses in which dedicated Classics Major/Honours students are enrolled.

Recommendation 9: The Department should provide, and the Undergraduate Adviser should use, a tentative list of course offerings for the two-year cycle in order to help undergraduates plan their programs.

Recommendation 10: The Department should purposefully seek to offer a time-table of courses in any particular year which, as far as possible, eliminates any necessity of individual students seeking “special courses” to complete the degree programs. Similarly, the Head of the Department should actively discourage the addition of special courses to faculty workloads in order to protect and ensure the overall development of junior faculty members.

The Review Panel is of the opinion that these modest steps in reshaping the curriculum and annual course offerings could provide some relief from the difficulties identified by faculty and students.

6. Graduate Program

The current faculty members inherited a graduate program that was established by their predecessors in 1995. With the near dissolution of the Department in the early 2000s, a moratorium was placed on the program until the Department could be rebuilt. In 2009 a proposal was submitted to the School of Graduate Studies outlining revisions to the program that better suited the current academic profile of the Department. According to the Self-Study Report (p. 41), it was believed that the proposal had been rejected and the faculty members recently began to work on revisions for a new submission. Meanwhile, three new MA candidates were accepted in 2009 and one more was added to the program in 2011. According to the MUN calendar the MA in Classics is a one-year program

consisting of course work, and a research essay or comprehensive exam based on reading lists of Greek and Roman authors. The faculty members have struggled to follow the existing program guidelines and none of the current students has completed their studies.

The Classics Self-Study document outlines some of the deficiencies in the current graduate program (p. 40). They feel that the entrance requirements may be too high, since most of the applicants are weak in one or both of the language requirements. Accommodating graduate students in senior undergraduate courses (so-called “piggy-backing”) is almost unavoidable in small units, but it is not problematic if done correctly and cautiously. The practice avoids using too great a percentage of resources for a very small number of graduates, while allowing students to get their Latin and Greek. The Department is considering the possibility of adding a thesis-based stream. Since it is officially a one year program, the School of Graduate Studies provides only one year of guaranteed funding. In addition, the editors of *Mouseion*, in collaboration with the School of Graduate Studies, offer an annual internship (\$10,000). This has been held by two different graduate students.

The APR Panel was able to address these issues through an interview with the current Graduate Coordinator, the Graduate Committee and one of the graduate students. A second graduate student submitted written comments by email. On the second day of the review the Coordinator was able to inform the Panel that all four graduate students anticipate graduating at Spring Convocation 2013. The Secretary to the Dean of Graduate Studies (Annette Williams) informed the Panel (via email to the APR Coordinator) that the 2009 submission of a proposal for a revised graduate program had not been rejected, as the Department had thought, and had been vetted by the Graduate Studies Academic Council Executive. The next step is consultation with the Classics Department for revisions, before being forwarded to Academic Council for consideration.

The Departmental Graduate Committee outlined some of its thoughts on going forward with revisions to the graduate program. The Graduate Committee would like to increase student enrollment by up to four students. This would enable the Department to teach stand-alone graduate courses and reduce the need for offering combined undergraduate/graduate courses. The APR Panel feels that this might be a little too optimistic, and, as noted above, believes that graduate students are not necessarily harmed by taking courses with senior undergraduates. The Graduate Committee reiterated its desire to revise the entrance and exit requirements for the degree, so that students could finish in a shorter period of time. Another concern is recruitment. The Graduate Officer talked about designing a poster to distribute to other Classics departments and updating the departmental website with more detailed faculty profiles. Furthermore, the Department hopes to develop a newsletter that could also be distributed on campus and to other Classics departments.

Both graduate students were very pleased with their experience in the Classics graduate program. One student described it as a nurturing environment. The undergraduates that were interviewed enjoyed the experience of combined courses, since it forced them to perform at a higher level. However, the graduate students felt that these courses were not

always challenging enough. They also agreed that the program lacked a methodology course that covered archaeology, paleography, textual criticism, bibliography and historiography.

Recommendation 11: We encourage the Office of the Dean of Arts and the School of Graduate Studies to make every effort to assist the Graduate Committee of the Department of Classics with revisions to its graduate program proposal.

Recommendation 12: The Department should define more closely where its research strengths lie and develop a graduate program around these strengths. We learn from the Self-Study Report (p. 36) that the previous faculty cohort emphasized language and history. The current faculty could focus on Roman Studies, both text and material culture, and use this to draw in new graduate applicants.

Recommendation 13: The department should attempt to increase its visibility at MUN and other Classics departments across Canada in order to attract more graduate applications. To achieve this goal they should seek assistance from the appropriate university departments to develop posters, a newsletter and improve their website.

Recommendation 14: We are sympathetic with the Department's wish to expand its graduate program, but we feel that it should proceed at a more modest pace of one or two candidates per year. Revisions to the undergraduate requirements should aim to reduce the faculty course load so that they can devote more time to graduate courses. This could include one-on-one reading courses. In terms of combined undergraduate/graduate courses, the Department might also consider reversing the current process, and give some of the best senior undergraduates the opportunity to take a graduate course, and giving these students a general 4000 level credit. This may not be possible for Latin and Greek language courses, but might work for Civilization courses. This practice has been followed in some other departments at Memorial University, especially while they were building their graduate student complement. The Department should also be open to cross-supervisions with other departments and encouraging its students to take graduate courses in other departments which have larger enrollments.

Recommendation 15: The Department should offer a stand-alone methodology (or Theory and Method) course in its graduate program. This is standard practice in most disciplines and such courses can be team-taught, with faculty members taking turns receiving teaching credit. Alternatively, the Department could negotiate with other departments in the Faculty of Arts to reserve space(s) in their graduate methodology courses for graduate students in Classics.

Recommendation 16: In its revisions of the graduate degree program, the Department should give some serious consideration to revising the existing entrance and exit requirements, and possibly adding a thesis-based stream in tandem with a course-based program, as is the case in many other Classics Departments across the country.

7. Summary of General Remarks and Recommendations

The current Department is composed entirely of new and junior faculty members, as the result of the complete changeover of the academic staff since 2002/3 through unexpected resignations, retirements, and an untimely death within a very short time frame. These new faculty members deemed it most useful to expend their energies in rebuilding their academic offerings to reflect the Department's current configuration and in shepherding themselves and their colleagues through the tenure process (five of the six full-time academic staff coming up for tenure in a period of only five years). Given this unusual and challenging situation, the Department opted to commit themselves to what they refer to as a "holistic" approach to undergraduate curriculum as a sort of guiding principle in the Department, and in so doing have not moved to develop a more focused vision of their academic strengths as a graduate unit. While the Review Panel recognizes that the holistic approach in undergraduate curriculum and a clearly stated vision of the academic strengths of the department overall are not mutually exclusive elements, we believe that a focused articulation of teaching and research strengths would be to the department's benefit. In addition, the Review Panel recognizes that the Department is still in the process of developing a full understanding of the range of services and possibilities of collaboration available to it across the university, and is working to create a greater visibility both within the university and in the general community.

The six current full-time faculty members are all young, energetic, dedicated and enthusiastic. Their students all speak highly of them and are in most respects very happy with their educational experience in the Department. It is the opinion of the Review Panel that issues with dedicated space should be resolved over time in negotiations with the Office of the Dean of Arts. And while the potential benefits of hiring an additional faculty member (a suggestion repeated in several interviews) seem obvious, the Review Panel did not see such a hiring as a necessary condition for the recommendations outlined above. In sum, the Review Panel recognizes the considerable strengths of the Department of Classics which place it in an enviable position for the future.