

**YORK UNIVERSITY**

Final Assessment Report Executive Summary

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies and  
the Faculty of Graduate Studies

**Philosophy, Undergraduate Programs (BA),  
Graduate Program (MA, and PhD)**

**Cyclical Program Review – 2008 to 2015**

This Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the programs listed below.

**Program(s) Reviewed:**

BA Program (90 Credits) Philosophy  
BA (Honours) Program (120 credits) Philosophy  
BA (Specialized Honours) Program (120 credits) Philosophy  
Honours (Minor) (120 credits) Philosophy  
BA (Specialized Honours) Program (120 credits) Cognitive Science  
Honours (Minor) Cognitive Science  
General Certificate in Practical Ethics  
MA Program Philosophy  
JD/MA Program (combines the JD law program with the MA Program) PhD Program  
Philosophy  
Graduate Diploma in Value Theory and Applied Ethics

**Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:**

Dr. Samantha Brennan, Professor, Department of Philosophy/Women's Studies,  
Western University, Ontario  
Dr. John Heil, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Washington University, St. Louis,  
Missouri  
Dr. Kirk Ludwig, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, Bloomington,  
Indiana  
Dr. Patricia Wood, Professor, Department of Geography, York University

**Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones:**

Cyclical Program Review Launch: September 2016  
Self-study (undergraduate and graduate) submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: August  
2017  
Date of the Site Visit: October 4-6, 2017  
Review Report received: December 2017  
Program Response received: February 2018  
Dean's Response received: May 2018  
The Final Assessment Report was delayed because of a labour disruption. As a result,  
many of the recommendations had already been acted on prior to the Joint  
Subcommittee's deliberations. Where possible, actions taken are reflected in the  
Implementation Plan.  
Implementation Plan and FAR confirmed by Joint Sub-Committee on Quality  
Assurance, March 2019

Submitted by Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic, York University



This review was conducted under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol,  
August 2013.

**SITE VISIT: October 4-6, 2017**

Over the three days, meetings were held at the Keele campus and the Glendon campus. The reviewers began the site visit with a meeting with Vice-Provost Academic, Alice Pitt and Faculty of Graduate Studies Interim Dean, Fahim Quadir on the Keele Campus. In addition, the reviewers met with LAPS Associate Dean Programs, J.J. McMurtry, and Associate Dean Research and Grad Studies, Sandra Whitworth. On the Keele campus meetings were held with the Chair, Associate Chair, Undergraduate Program Director, Graduate Program Director, Deputy Graduate Program Director, the Cognitive Science Coordinator and the Modes of Reasoning Coordinator. Meetings were held with Full-time Faculty at Keele and at Glendon, contract faculty members and student groups at both campuses. The reviewers had lunch with graduate students and met with Graduate Faculty members, faculty from the Cognitive Science program and the University librarians.

**OUTCOME:**

The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance received the Program and Decanal responses to the recommendations, and confirms that the institutional implementation plan is clear and achievable and, once completed, will serve to enhance the quality of the program.

A report on the ongoing progress of the initiatives that will be undertaken in response to accepted recommendations will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due 18 months after confirmation of the plan by the Joint Sub-Committee (September 2020).

The next Cyclical Program Review will begin in the Fall of 2024 with a site visit expected in the Fall of 2025 or Winter of 2026.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND STRENGTHS:**

The following is extracted from the Review Report: "The Philosophy Department offers four undergraduate degrees, a BA in Philosophy, an Honours BA in Philosophy, a Specialized Honours BA in Philosophy, and a Specialized Honours BA in Cognitive Science. The department also offers an Honours Minor in Philosophy, and in Cognitive Science, and a General Certificate in Practical Ethics. The general goals of the program are to inculcate in students the skills of critical evaluation and exploration of fundamental principles and an historical understanding of Philosophy, which places Philosophy at the center of a liberal arts education. It aims to develop skills in analyzing, evaluating, and constructing and supporting arguments both orally and in writing, skills that are transferable to any subject and any area of life. It aims to instill in students' knowledge of the main positions on central philosophical questions about value, authority, meaning, knowledge and existence, the ability to appreciate alternative positions and points of view, and a healthy skepticism about simple solutions. These goals align with the central goals of philosophical education at every first-rate institution."

The Master's program is an intensive course of preparation for applications to PhD programs and the "requirement of two structured courses each in theoretical and practical philosophy, as opposed to distribution requirements, is exactly the right thing

to do,” stated the reviewers in their report.

The four-year JD/MA program appears to be well thought out and the thesis requirement ensures that the MA student develops research skills at the intersection of law and philosophy of the PhD program. In regards to this program, the reviewers had this to say: “This is a well-designed program, certainly well in the mainstream of graduate programs, and the department is to be commended in particular for designing program components (i) to get students up-to-speed on what is required for success in a PhD program with the first year seminar and (ii) to help students in the third year make the transition to the dissertation smoothly with the third year research seminar. Both of these make an important contribution to ensuring that students make timely and appropriate progress toward the degree, especially the structured approach to getting students through the third-year requirements and onto the dissertation writing stage. The Two Paper requirement in addition helps to professionalize students by requiring them to prepare two publishable quality papers as a qualification for continuing in the PhD program.”

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The chart below outlines the implementation plan approved by the Joint Subcommittee on Quality Assurance in March 2019.

In addition, the reviewers made eight thoughtful suggestions about the Philosophy program’s curriculum and enrolment. The Program and the Dean’s Office are together considering those that might be possible as the program evolves.

Recommendations and Suggestions	Action	Responsible for Follow-up	Timeline
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>			
1 That P2100 Introduction to Logic for the philosophy BA.	Program to consider recommendation as it clarifies curricular path for the program learning outcomes.	Program	Report in Follow-up Report due September 2020
2 That the special role played by the First Year Seminar and the Third Year Research Seminar in the Philosophy PhD program be recognized.	Program to review curricular structure of the graduate program in light of declining enrolment.	Program	Report in Follow-up Report due September 2020
3 That more opportunities for graduate students to teach their own courses be a priority in collective bargaining	No follow-up. Out of scope for Cyclical Program Reviewers.	n/a	n/a
4 Recommendation for Cognitive Science: That admissions requirements be changed for the Cognitive Science Specialized Honours BA to correspond to those for the Philosophy Specialized Honours BA.	Dean's Office continues to monitor applications to programs annually in consultation with programs and makes determinations about cut-offs with the Registrar's Office. No further action required.	n/a	ongoing
5 Recommendation for Philosophy: That Central Advising train one or two advisors to be dedicated advisors for cognitive science and philosophy majors	Dean's Office is working with the Academic Advising unit on new model for advisor assignment and training. No further action required.	n/a	ongoing
6 That faculty retiring in the next few years be replaced	Two searches authorized for positions to start in July 2019. No further action required.	Program/Dean's Office/University	Report in Follow-up Report due September

			2020
7 That tutorials not be scheduled before the lectures to which they pertain.	Program and Dean's Office giving careful consideration to recommendation within York context. No further action required.		
8 That there should be a reduction of impediments to the participation of graduate faculty at Glendon in the graduate program.	The Provost is actively considering ways to facilitate inter-faculty graduate teaching arrangements.	Provost	Ongoing
<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>			
1 Require Ancient Philosophy as well as Modern Philosophy for all majors for the philosophy BA and consider requiring a two-semester sequence in Modern Philosophy or introduce a one-semester survey course in Modern Philosophy as a requirement. Consider requiring a 3000-level ethics course for the BA in philosophy.	Department to consider curricular recommendation. No further action required.	Department	n/a
2 For graduate programs, allow a course that has at least four students in it to run	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
3 Highlight value of philosophy degree on website.	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
4 The reviewers suggest that the department consider direct entry to the PhD program for students	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
5 The reviewers suggest that the department use GRE mailing lists to contact Canadian students	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
6 The reviewers suggest that the availability of information on the	No further action required.	n/a	n/a

departmental website concerning the PhD program be more accessible			
7 Feature in promotional materials testimonials from current PhD students.	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
8 Provide the placement officer with a fall semester course release.	No further action required.	n/a	n/a
9 To enhance the department's offerings, help distribute the supervisory load, increase the proportion of 3000 and 4000 level courses taught by full-time faculty,	No further action required.	n/a	n/a