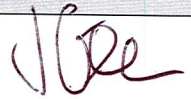



Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Religious Studies, BA / King's University College

Program	Religious Studies, BA	Faculty / Affiliated University College	King's University College
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-U: January 20, 2021 SCAPA: February 3, 2021 Senate: February 12, 2021	Year of the Next Review	2027-2028
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/igap/academic_programs/igap_reports/kings_undergrad/2020%20Kings%20Religious%20Studies%20Program%20Review.pdf		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)	<i>Not applicable</i>		

	Name	Signature	Date
Program Chair/Director	Jonathan Geen		June 26/2023
Dean (or delegate)	Robert A. Ventresca		June 24, 2023

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Include Indigenous content, particularly in the Catholic Studies for Teachers modules	Respond to need created by revised Catholic education curriculum; integrate content into senior seminars in particular	Chair of the program	September 2022
<p>Recommendation Implemented</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially</p> <p>If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>			
<p>Progress</p> <p><i>What specific actions have been taken?</i></p> <p>Our last IQAP review occurred in the 2019-20 academic year. The pandemic required the department to focus on management of teaching and student support in new and changing modalities. Given the numerous requirements of the Catholic Studies for Teachers modules, it was determined that inclusion of Indigenous voices and content was better served throughout the curriculum and across existing courses than by the addition of a separate required course. We have also faced the challenge of finding Indigenous scholars to teach courses.</p> <p>In the 2021-22 academic year, we offered a senior seminar in Catholic Studies (RS 4420G) entitled “Truth & Reconciliation and the Catholic Church.” This course focused on the ways in which the Church was responding to the findings of the Truth & Reconciliation Committee of Canada’s Final Report, and it included discussion of the effects of the Residential School System and the recent</p>			

discovery of unmarked graves. Several guest speakers representing the Indigenous communities in Canada were invited to speak to the class on these and other issues. Given the relatively few students in our programs that complete 4th-year seminars, this course could not be made mandatory nor offered yearly, but it will hopefully be offered again at some point.

Similarly, over the past year, some of our other courses have found ways to incorporate new Indigenous content into their curricula, including inviting Indigenous guest speakers. These courses include RS 2207E (Christian Ethics: Issues and Challenges) and RS 2230F/G (Ecology, Spirituality, and Justice).

In the 2022-23 academic year, we offered a new course (2171A/B) entitled “Decolonizing the Bible,” which examines the ways in which the Judeo-Christian Bible has been used as a tool of colonization and oppression, as well as the ways it can and has been appropriated by oppressed groups to combat oppression. This course includes significant content related to the colonization of Canada and the impact it had on Indigenous communities.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

We are attempting to find ways to incorporate Indigenous-related content into a number of our pre-existing courses, particularly in our Catholic Studies courses, but this is a work in progress. By strategically integrating Indigenous voices and content across required courses, we can ensure that graduates will have covered many of the relevant issues related to decolonization, Indigenization, and Truth and Reconciliation, and will have heard and engaged a diversity of voices.

The initiatives undertaken over the past couple of years have allowed us to work more closely with the Indigenous lead and advisors of the London District Catholic School Board, and with other Indigenous partners. We will continue to foster cooperation with these important partners.

Additional Comments

The Academic Dean's Office acknowledges the department's meaningful commitment to integrating Indigenous voices and perspectives into curriculum and pedagogy. As part of the 10th Academic Review, which will be presented in Fall 2023, the Academic Dean will be engaging all academic programs and departments at King's in a comprehensive review of curriculum, pedagogies, and academic administrative structures. A comprehensive academic strategic plan will flow from this review mandating that all academic departments continue to explore ways to diversity course offerings, including ways to integrate Indigenous voices and perspectives. The plan envisions ways of reimagining traditional liberal arts disciplines such as Religious Studies and Theology, which are essential to the unique identity and mission of King's, and a premise of differentiation under the terms of the affiliation agreement with Western University. The academic strategic plan will include concrete and realistic timelines and accountabilities for implementation.

Recommendation #2	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Ensure students are receiving good information and guidance from academic advising.	Chair to communicate program requirements and needs clearly with academic advising.	Chair of the program	Immediately and Ongoing

Recommendation Implemented

Yes No Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? Yes No

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

It was unnecessary for us to take any major steps along this line, as we are largely dependent upon the Academic Dean's Office (ADO) for this type of support. In our opinion, the ADO at King's has always provided students with excellent information and guidance, and they are only getting better. Recent changes in the ADO, including the addition of staff, are making student-focused information and advice more easily transmittable and more effective.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

The one weak link in our information chain is our departmental website, which we are currently reviewing and updating. It is unclear how often students rely on our website to acquire information (as opposed to the ADO), but we are looking for ways to improve its utility to students.

Additional Comments

The Dean's office would underscore that King's is undertaking an institutional-level review and restructuring of its website, in addition to academic strategic planning that will explore the feasibility of online learning strategies at King's-Western.

Recommendation #3	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline	
Consider diverse recommendations for increasing student enrolment (e.g., more	Discussion within the department, follow up to be determined thereafter.	Chair of the program Academic Dean	Ongoing	

interdisciplinary modules/courses)				
<p>Recommendation Implemented</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially</p> <p>If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>				
<p>Progress</p> <p><i>What specific actions have been taken?</i></p> <p>Since the last Departmental Review, we have created and offered two new interdisciplinary courses, one of which is cross-listed with Social Justice and Peace Studies (RS 2230 – Ecology, Spirituality, and Justice), and the other one cross-listed with Thanatology (RS 2270 – Religious Perspectives on Death and Dying). Both of these courses have enrolled well. This brings our total number of cross-listed courses to 5 (4 with SJPS and 1 with Thanatology).</p> <p>As mentioned above, we have also launched RS 2171A/B “Decolonizing the Bible,” which covers a number of topics beyond religion itself. In the coming academic year (2023-24), we are launching a new course focused on the Middle East (RS 2259F/G – Religion and Society in the Middle East), which will incorporate religious issues into the wider social and political landscape of the Middle East.</p> <p>At the present time, there are no plans to offer any new interdisciplinary programs or modules with other departments.</p>				
<p>Next Steps (if applicable)</p> <p><i>What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?</i></p>				

Additional Comments			
<i>See comments above regarding the 10th Academic Review which will address issues of strategic enrolment as it relates to academic programming. The Dean's office will continue to support Religious Studies in its efforts to address enrolment issues given the centrality of Religious Studies to the unique identity and mission of King's as a liberal arts university college in the Catholic tradition.</i>			
Recommendation #4	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Consider development of more programming around the theme of religion and the environment.	Discussion within the department, follow up to be determined thereafter.	Chair of the program	Ongoing
Recommendation Implemented			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially			
If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Progress			
<i>What specific actions have been taken?</i>			
Originally, we ran a special topics course entitled "Ecology, Spirituality, and Justice," and this course has now become its own, regularly-running and well-enrolled course (RS 2230F/G), cross-listed with SJPS.			
Next Steps (if applicable)			

<p><i>What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?</i></p> <p>Similar to our aim of incorporating Indigenous-related content into pre-existing required Catholic Studies courses (discussed above), we will be attempting to work environment-related issues into already existing RS courses. This is a work in progress.</p>	
<p>Additional Comments</p> <p><i>If applicable</i></p>	

Note: The total number of expandable text boxes will be dependent on the number of prioritized recommendations appearing in the program's most recent Final Assessment Report (FAR).

<p>Continuous Program Enhancement</p>
<p><i>What additional initiatives or changes has the program been working on in relation to continuous program improvement?</i></p>