

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY PLANNING

### Academic Unit Review – Summary

**Program:** Canadian Studies

<b>Site Visit</b>	March 24, 2011
<b>Date of Report</b>	May 3, 2011
<b>Informal Response to Planning</b>	June 23, 2011
<b>Formal Response to Planning</b>	November 17, 2011
<b>Implementation Update</b>	Expected Winter 2013
<b>Midterm Review</b>	Expected Fall 2016

#### Summary of Departmental Self-Study

The Canadian Studies program at Mount Allison, the oldest such undergraduate program in Canada, has been in existence for more than forty years. It has since its establishment experienced a shift from an essentially narrative approach to introducing and exploring Canadian history and culture to its current emphasis on helping students develop a critical engagement with the diversity and dynamics of the lived experiences of Canadians. Its academic program involves a number of core Canadian Studies courses and a wide range of courses provided by other academic units that can be used as distribution credits or electives towards completion of a Minor, a Major, or Honours in Canadian Studies within the B.A. degree. As they prepared the program's self-study, and in response to the Academic Renewal Plan adopted at Mount Allison in 2009, those involved in the Canadian Studies program conducted a thorough program mapping exercise, focusing on curricular objectives and learning outcomes. The self-study provides details on the curriculum and program requirements in each of the degree options offered. It also outlines recent changes in the program's pedagogical approach and its curriculum, emerging from the general academic renewal process at Mount Allison.

The full-time equivalent faculty complement in Canadian Studies is slightly over 2.0. Canadian Studies has one faculty member whose teaching is fully within the program, another member cross-appointed with the English Department, the W.P. Bell post-doctoral fellow, and a three-credit stipendiary appointment provided as part of the soon-to-be-ending Canada Research Chair position in Canadian Public Policy held in Economics. For much of the year, Canadian Studies shares a secretary with the History Department and the Women's and Gender Studies program, except during the summer months when there is only one secretary serving all academic units in Hart Hall.

The Canadian Studies program is well regarded across the country and within Canadian Studies circles outside of Canada. The Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies and the Director of its undergraduate program have assumed significant duties in connection with both the *Journal of Canadian Studies* (editor and associate editor, respectively) and with the Canadian Studies Network; the program director also serves on the editorial boards of both *Acadiensis* and the Acadiensis Press; and the Director of the Centre has contributed significantly to the work of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

As pointed out in the self-study, enrolment in Canadian Studies courses in the last full year prior to the self-study stood at 270, having progressively declined from the 419 registrations experienced five years earlier. Reports from graduates of the program suggest that they do relatively well after completing their studies at Mount Allison, whether they continue their education elsewhere or pursue careers after graduation. The program is diligent in its attempts to evaluate teaching and, somewhat uniquely, conducts “exit polls” and organizes virtual and face-to-face focus groups with graduates so as to gather and consider student opinion concerning such topics as engaged citizenship and academic integrity, their general assessment of the learning experience in Canadian Studies, and how well specific curricular objectives and learning outcomes are met therein.

Although small, Canadian Studies serves as a flagship inter-disciplinary program for Mount Allison. It enjoys and uses creatively and effectively a generous endowment dedicated to supporting its many and varied activities, through the Centre for Canadian Studies and its resources. In addition to organizing many scholarly and co-curricular events, including public lectures, conferences, and publications, it also stimulates and supports other academic units in a variety of ways, as those units pursue inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary Canadianist projects of their own, often in collaboration with Canadian Studies.

The full-time faculty member of the Canadian Studies program currently acts as the Director of its academic program, and the cross-appointed faculty member currently serves as the Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies. Although the division of labour that has emerged over the years between these two positions and their incumbents is clear to those involved in the program, this structure does cause some confusion outside of it. Whether the current administrative structure best serves the interests of the program is flagged in the self-study for consideration by the external reviewers.

The authors of the self-study conclude by identifying a number of other top-of-mind issues concerning which they welcome advice from the external review team. Several curricular areas into which the program might expand are identified, and interest is expressed in offering intensive, block courses during intersession. The authors indicate a concern to streamline and better explain the requirements for the Major, particularly as they involve students taking Canada-centred courses provided by associated departments. They wonder whether they should introduce some

modest prerequisites for their 2000-level courses. Further, they flag for the external reviewers the intention to provide an alternative to the current French-language requirements, with the ambition of engendering a “sympathetic familiarity with French Canada” among Canadian Studies students. They also seek advice on the priority that they should give to updating and modernizing the delivery of their on-line courses. In addition, they mention the prospect of adding a non-thesis Honours option to the program and, in co-operation with the Music Department, creating a joint Canadian music and culture program.

The authors identify the need for additional teaching power within Canadian Studies, especially because of the unusual level and variety of the co-curricular and scholarly activities that the program and Centre involve, but also because of an interest in expanding their course offerings further into political economy. As for the previously identified administrative structure, Canadian Studies specifically directs the external reviewers to the question of whether the program should be reconstituted as a department.

### **Summary of External Reviewers’ Report**

The External Review Committee members provide an overview of the undergraduate program and the Centre for Canadian Studies, both of which they adjudge very positively. Nevertheless, sometimes following leads provided in the self-study itself, they make a number of suggestions concerning streamlining the delivery of courses, formalizing the relationship between the program and the Centre, and alleviating some of the administrative workload of both the Centre and program directors.

The reviewers characterize the program as student-focused and pedagogically inventive, and commend it as a “signature” program for the University. They are concerned, however, about the limited human resources dedicated to the program, fearing “burn out” for the Director of the program, and pointing out the implications for succession planning of having only one full-time faculty member in the program.

The reviewers make a series of recommendations, falling under curriculum and program requirements, infrastructural re-alignment, and broader University considerations.

#### *Curriculum and Program Requirements*

Several recommendations flow from the suggestion from Canadian Studies that it might move to eliminate or significantly modify the complex system of streams within their Major. The reviewers suggest the introduction of a first-year core course; the retention of the existing second year core course; the addition of one or two other courses at the second year level; the identification of CANA 3111 (“Native Peoples”) and CANA 3121 (“Multiculturalism, Immigration and Diversity”) as core courses at the third year level; and the addition of certain new 3000-level courses to be offered in rotation, as possible. They also recommend the introduction to the

Honours program of a 3-credit major research essay option and a 6-credit coursework option, as alternatives to the existing 6-credit thesis requirement for Honours. The coursework option that they envisage would include a fourth-year experiential learning or practicum component. They suggest that students be given the option to take either a Québec/French Canadian culture course or a French language course. They also recommend investment in developing strong on-line Canadian Studies courses and continuing to explore whether a joint program involving Canadian Studies and Music might be introduced.

#### *Infrastructural Re-alignment*

The reviewers recommend the merging of the Centre and the program so that the Centre would house the program and together they would become the equivalent of a department. Such an infrastructural re-alignment would serve to clarify, formalize, and institutionalize the relationship that has been developed over the years between the current Directors of the program and the Centre. They further suggest the establishment of a Canadian Studies Steering Committee, comprised of the two Directors and three Associate Faculty, preferably from three different programs. This latter would require appointing more Associate Faculty than currently exist (there is but one, at present). This would serve to establish a pool of colleagues from which to recruit Steering Committee members; bring a sense of community to the academic unit, which has strong support throughout the University; reduce the Directors' workloads; and facilitate the development of a succession plan as well.

#### *Broader University Considerations*

The reviewers point out that a number of critical decisions need to be made in collegial and administrative circles beyond Canadian Studies. They suggest the provision of dedicated space near faculty offices for the Centre, including work space for student interns and visiting scholars. They also recommend the establishment of a half-time administrative assistant position, to support more adequately the management of the Centre. They go on to suggest that another position be added to the faculty complement in the next five years. Finally, they recommend immediate investment in a content management system for the University as a whole, which would serve further to professionalize student recruitment to Canadian Studies, permit use of the Canadian Studies web pages to greater advantage for student advising purposes, and better publicize the Centre's extensive scholarly and outreach activities.

### **Summary of Departmental Response**

The formal response from the Canadian Studies program contains the observation that, although the program representatives do not agree with all of the recommendations found in the external review, the document does validate the program and its contributions and makes a number of important recommendations worth pursuing. In addition to discussing those recommendations, the response includes reference to changes made within the program and discussions with others, including the Dean of Arts and the University Planning Committee, since the

time of the reviewers' report, as part of the program's own ongoing self-development. It also isolates recommendations that require broader institutional changes for their implementation, as well as recommendations that in their view cannot or should not be implemented.

The program response concurs with the recommendation of the academic and administrative merger of the Canadian Studies academic program and the Centre for Canadian Studies under the title "Department of Canadian Studies." Its membership would include the current Directors of the academic program and the Centre for Canadian Studies, any Canadian Studies doctoral fellows (there are currently two, and there is always at least one), any part-time faculty members teaching in Canadian Studies, and the occupant of a new Tier II Canada Research Chair which it is anticipated will be filled as a result of the next round of competition. The already-existent steering committee unnecessarily recommended by the external reviewers would be maintained under the new arrangement.

The program response expresses agreement with the space recommendations found within the report; anticipates that viable short-term remedies for space needs, including those issuing from the anticipated appointment of a Tier II CRC, can be found; and recognizes that long-term solutions will be the focus once steps are taken to remodel Hart Hall as part of the ongoing campus development plan.

The program also agrees with the reviewers' comments concerning web presence, notes that this will depend upon the alacrity with which the University introduces the long awaited new content management system, and urges the University Planning Committee to join it in pressing for that to be done in the very near future. The program remains interested in continuing and possibly expanding its distance education offerings on an on-line basis, although further work in this area requires clarification of changes currently underway in Continuous Learning at Mount Allison.

As for the recommendations concerning changes in course offerings and program structure, the program indicates that it will move to modify the French-language requirement as recommended, with an eye to retaining its commitment to French as a Canadian language but permitting students to fulfill this objective either through the study of the language of French Canada or through the study of its history, culture, and/or society. The program adds that useful discussions concerning this change have been held with faculty members who teach French in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

The response also provides some detail on course additions and modifications that are being considered within Canadian Studies, indicating that the teaching resource issues raised by such possible changes form part of the rationale for the recommendation of a Canadian Studies Tier II CRC appointment. Such an appointment was discussed within the Faculty of Arts and with the Dean of Arts over the summer and into the fall, following encouragement in the spring from the

University Planning Committee and the Provost that the Faculty of Arts formulate one or more proposals for a Tier II CRC. Completion of an overall curriculum assessment in Canadian Studies will await approval of the CRC proposal by the Provost. Canadian Studies indicates that it had hoped to see more direction provided by the reviewers concerning possible changes to the line 5 options in the Major, but they will continue to discuss and consult on this matter over the course of the current academic year.

Canadian Studies also hoped to have seen more in the report on the development of a non-thesis Honours option. Given its current course structure at the upper-year level, and given its geographic location, the program anticipates that considerable discussion and consultation will be necessary to develop a non-thesis option, which is their intention. One particular concern that they raise about this option as the reviewers propose it is that they are uncertain as to how readily internship/EXPL-course opportunities would be available to Mount Allison Arts students, and suggest that the broader question of EXPL courses in the Arts be considered by its Heads group.

On staffing, Canadian Studies indicates that, beyond what has already been said concerning the possible addition of a Canada Research Chair, they are open to additional cross-appointments of faculty. They also hope that at least the Canadian-Studies-dedicated secretarial support that they receive from Fall to Spring could be extended into the summer months.

The program also provides comments on certain errors of emphasis and problematic recommendations within the report. They suggest that the reviewers failed to recognize sufficiently the regular teaching support and considerable administrative burden taken on by the Director of the Centre. They also question the likelihood that faculty housed in other academic units would be prepared to shoulder administrative responsibilities in Canadian Studies given their existing duties in their home departments. Further, they express a disinclination to offer a 1000-level introductory course in Canadian Studies, since they would prefer that students have some academic-disciplinary background prior to their being introduced to the inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach emphasized in Canadian Studies. They are also opposed to moving to the cross-listing of courses in Canadian Studies, essentially because most of the candidate courses for cross-listing are disciplinary-based rather than inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary in orientation.

The program's response concludes with a summary of the major elements of its action plan in response to the external review, including timelines for each of the projects outlined.

## **Planning Committee and Provost Response**

The University Planning Committee and the Provost commend the Directors for their having organized the identification and clarification of Canadian Studies objectives and for having engaged in a curricular mapping exercise, concurrently with preparing a carefully worked out self-study. They also applaud the program's thorough and thoughtful response to the external review and for its having developed in fairly short order a clear action plan. That plan includes reference to changes already underway, ones currently being contemplated, and decisions outside of the program that need to be made, or developments that need to work themselves out more fully or become further clarified, before action can be taken.

We are fully aware that many of the changes that have been recommended by the reviewers or by the program require broader collegial discussion and/or administrative encouragement, support, and redeployment or addition of resources. We note in this connection that the campus master plan envisages that Hart Hall, the home of Canadian Studies, should be the focus of the next major infrastructural project, once the Fine and Performing Arts building work is underway. That project would include finding ways to improve the configuration of space currently provided to Canadian Studies, and possibly expansion in same. We observe too that just recently a document outlining the new administrative approach to the provision of on-line and Spring session courses, and subsequent discussion of those plans, should provide the clarification sought by Canadian Studies vis-à-vis their own possible on-line offerings in future. Similarly, the roll-out plans for the recently-purchased content management system and the soliciting of proposals for recasting Mount Allison's web presence should serve to clarify the process for and timing of planned changes to the Canadian Studies web pages. Another favorable recent development is the Provost's recent decision to authorize, as recommended by the Arts Heads and the University Planning and Research and Creative Activity Committees, the creation of a search committee for a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Canadian Studies (with a thematic focus on diversity studies and social justice), in part as a way to respond positively to the recommendation of an addition to the faculty complement in Canadian Studies. The additional teaching power introduced by such an appointment, assuming that the search and nomination processes were successful, would be helpful.

We agree that that reconstituting Canadian Studies as a department should be pursued, so as to streamline the operations of the program and dissipate the confusion evident in some circles. Further discussion of this department-designation proposal within the University Planning Committee and Senate would be framed, at least in part, around the ongoing discussions over the past few years of the need for academic departments to have a minimum of four faculty members, so as to offer a Major or an Honours program without excessive course-rotation, student confusion, and faculty "burnout". However, we would suggest that Canadian Studies, as an inter-disciplinary program with a number of associated academic departments providing distribution credits and electives to Canadian Studies

students, is in a significantly different situation than the small academic departments. It might, as a result, be concluded that a positive decision on the matter of departmental designation need not hinge on whether or not a CRC is added to the faculty complement.

We encourage the program to continue its consideration of how it might simplify and streamline its requirements for the Major and for Honours. We would suggest that, even setting aside the reviewers' recommendation of a 1000-level Canadian Studies course, some of their other suggestions concerning designation of core courses and adding of courses at the 2000 level, in connection with lines 1 and 2 of the Major requirements, might well contribute to the objective of streamlining those requirements. As to the notion of cross-listing courses with departments and the idea of creating a 1000-level course, we find the program's response to these recommendations reasonable. Still, we wonder whether the inter-disciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity in the approach of some courses in the associated departments have been underestimated in that response, and suggest that this matter be considered further.

Although there was initially some division of opinion within the University Planning Committee as to the wisdom of no longer requiring basic facility in the French language of Canadian Studies students, we are satisfied that the new approach being considered has merit, and should be forwarded to the Academic Matters Committee and Senate for discussion, along with all of the various course and program changes being considered. These other changes include the introduction of a non-thesis Honours option, with or without an experiential learning/internship element. We would point out that, in addition to discussions within the program and among the Arts Heads of the viability of the experiential learning idea, there has relatively recently been created an Experiential Learning Committee whose members might have some helpful suggestions in this regard.

We recommend that the senior administration consider increasing both the secretarial and administrative-assistant support provided to Canadian Studies, as requested by the program and recommended by the reviewers.

As the program continues its internal reflection on these several matters, and any others that might have arisen in the self-study, in the external review, or in discussion within the program, and as the program pursues the various courses of action that it will thereby have identified, there will be ample opportunity to consult with the Dean of Arts, the University Planning Committee, and the Provost, if that should be required.