

# Final Assessment Report for the 2024-2025 Cyclical Review of the Department of Philosophy Programs

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the Department of Philosophy, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the Department's response, and the decanal response. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the university's [Cyclical Program Review Public Accountability webpage](#).

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

## SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

The Department of Philosophy undertook its last cyclical program review in 2017-2018. Self-Study authorship was led by Dr. Ashwani Peetush, Chair of the Department of Philosophy with writing contributions from several full-time faculty in the Department. Faculty input was provided through this writing process as well as a faculty retreat held in support of the cyclical review. The support of Andrea Nechita, Senior Administrative Assistant, is also gratefully acknowledged in the Self-Study. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the Department also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, the Vice Dean of

the Faculty of Arts and the Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on October 24, 2024, and an in-person site visit was held at Laurier's Waterloo campus on March 3-4, 2025.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Penelope Ironstone** from the Department of Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Henry Jackman** from the Department of Philosophy at York University and **Dr. Jon Miller** from the Department of Philosophy at Queen's University. During the site visit, the committee met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Heidi Northwood, Provost and Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Ashwani Peetush, Chair of the Department of Philosophy
- Dr. Brent Wolfe, Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Gavin Brockett, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Full-time faculty in the Department of Philosophy
- Philosophy undergraduate students
- Ms. Andrea Nechita, Senior Administrative Assistant
- Dr. Rebekah Johnston, Undergraduate Advisor
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Department Head, Information Resources
- Ms. Sally Heath, Associate Director: Academic Program Development and Quality Assurance

The review committee submitted their completed report on April 8, 2025. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

## EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the winter of 2025, the reviewers were sent a comprehensive set of documents regarding the Department of Philosophy at WLU. They reviewed these documents in preparation for their campus visit. This visit occurred on March 3-4, 2025. After the visit, the reviewers spent several weeks writing and editing their report. They compiled a list of recommendations, which will be reproduced below.

Before setting forth the list, the reviewers wish to make three main points. The first is that they are extremely impressed with the quality of teaching and research happening in WLU's Department of Philosophy. All of the faculty are deeply committed to their jobs, doing what they can to maintain and enhance philosophy at the university. Despite the difficult circumstances of the past several years, the philosophy faculty strive wherever possible to create a healthy environment for all students, staff and fellow professors. The students value the

education that they are receiving. Students, staff and faculty alike express appreciation for the strong sense of community found in the Department.

That's the first point. The second point follows closely from it. The reviewers assert, in the strongest possible terms, that if the university wishes to have a Department of Philosophy, then it *must* create more permanent, full-time faculty positions. At present, there are seven faculty in the Department (not counting CTFs). In the written documents and again during the campus visit, the reviewers were told that four of those people will be retiring over the next five years, meaning that the Department will be down to just three full-time faculty by the start of the next decade. The reviewers do not think it is possible to run a Philosophy Department at a university the size of Wilfrid Laurier with just three professors. At a minimum, the reviewers urge that the four pending retirements be replaced with four new positions. This is just what would be required to keep the Department functioning. To meet expected student growth as well as resume the graduate program, more positions beyond these three would be provided to the Department. Ideally, the Department would be brought back to where it was prior to the current era of austerity began, so it would have ten full-time faculty. The reviewers realize that would be financially challenging. At the same time, they insist that the Department must be staffed at current levels and no smaller.

A related issue here concerns the area of specialization (AOS) for each of these positions. Ultimately, the reviewers would defer to the judgment of the faculty at WLU since they best know their situation. When new lines are provided to the Department, the reviewers offer these suggestions for AOSs:

1. Specialist in a particular (open) area of non-Western philosophy (e.g., Virtue ethics in Chinese philosophies)
2. History of Philosophy, other than Greek and medieval
3. Philosophy of Mind/Language
4. Ethics, Social & Political Philosophy, especially someone capable of addressing current concerns/issues, such as feminism, climate, race-theory, and AI).

These four AOSs are not ranked. It is not necessary to fill #1 first, then #2 and so on. The Department can decide the order in which to hire.

Now the reviewers will proceed to their third main point. This concerns the teaching of 300 and 400-level courses. In the opinion of the reviewers, it is imperative that the Department continue to be allowed to restrict access to these courses. Priority must be given to Philosophy students. If space remains in a course after all of the interested Philosophy students have enrolled, then the course may be opened to non-Philosophy students.

This point will be made in the formal recommendations below. During the course of the on-campus meetings, it came up several times with students and faculty. It is of such importance to all of them that the reviewers wish to flag it here.

With those points in mind, the reviewers will now reiterate the formal recommendations that they make in their report. They will be reproduced here without further comment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 13 recommendations to improve the quality of the Department of Philosophy programs and students' experience in them. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the Department's response, and a response by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, as appropriate to the recommendation.

**Recommendation #1:** If the MA program is resumed, the Department should utilize previous admissions requirements when evaluating applications from prospective students.

**Unit Response:** We agree, we will use previous admissions requirements once our MA program is restarted; these requirements have allowed the Department to attract a contingent of outstanding students over the years with the necessary and appropriate background in philosophy to engage a wide array of philosophical concerns in many areas of research: from analytic metaphysics, to environmental and medical ethics, feminist and Indigenous epistemologies, to Indian philosophies of consciousness and mind.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts recognizes the value of a MA program in Philosophy to students, faculty and the University. If the Department decides to prioritize restarting the program, then we will do our best to support it in every respect.

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:** Similar to the Faculty of Arts, if the Department decides to resume the MA program, the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office will provide support for all aspects, including admissions. Given the statements made by the Department, and listed requirements in the Self-Study and commentary (p. 19), I also see no need to alter previous MA admission requirements.

**Recommendation #2:** We recommend that the Department continue its effort to diversify the curriculum, though we recognize that this may not be possible without new hires. (See p. 39 of the self-study for two recent attempts by the Department to do this, though, unfortunately, the proposed hires were not approved.)

**Unit Response:** We will continue to diversify the curriculum; this has been one of our department's key aims (see pages of 37-39). Let us note that these aims are not just departmental but form a part of Laurier's official mandate: Laurier's goal of Decolonization of the Curriculum (Goal 1, #5) is central to advancing transformative education, as well as the University's Strategic Academic Plan and Laurier's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Students too have noticed the glaring lacuna in the Department's curricular offerings, and they are no longer willing to put up with this, they are also demanding this change. However, as noted by the Reviewers, such aims are challenging given Departmental limited resources and by the fact that our full-time faculty contingent has been gravely reduced. But even without relevant resources, our Department has made outstanding strides: for example, offering new courses in marginalized areas such as Chinese Philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Sanskrit I and II, Feminist Philosophies, Philosophy of Disability. However, the cost of making these innovative strides is that our faculty spend countless hours training themselves in unfamiliar areas, which is time away from their main areas of research and publication. We simply do not have the expertise to cover the vast landscape of non-

Euro-Western philosophies, to “decolonize the curriculum” as is demanded by Wilfrid Laurier’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and its Strategic Academic Plan without more resources.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts commends the Philosophy Department for the significant steps it has taken in recent years to diversify and decolonize its curriculum: the changes are very evident. As we look to replace retiring faculty members we shall keep in mind the importance of continuing to support this shift in approach that current colleagues have spearheaded in the Department.

**Recommendation #3:** We recommend that the 3rd and 4th year courses remain restricted to Philosophy majors. Both faculty and students take these to be essential parts of the program and the sense of community, and since they are almost fully enrolled, there seems to be no financial need to open them up. (Indeed, doing so might make them unavailable for majors who need them to graduate).

**Unit Response:** We agree; as discussed in the External Reviewers’ Report, this reflects a key concern for our majors and faculty. All our courses are open to non-Majors except the 300-level and 400-level. These upper-level courses are already few in number: 7/40 required for the Honours; and, 5/40 for the Combined Honours. These courses are designed to provide the opportunity for in-depth examination of philosophical topics, and thus presuppose a basic understanding of various historical and conceptual philosophical frameworks. They allow faculty to provide advanced training to students so that they can acquire the technical skills (e.g., symbolic logic, argument theory and construction) and a deeper content knowledge, worthy of an undergraduate degree in Philosophy. Over the years, there are sometimes suggestions by the administration that these upper-level courses be open to non-majors; this is not possible without undermining the basis of a degree in philosophy with which our majors may apply to pursue graduate work.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** As long as the Department is able to accurately predict the number of senior courses necessary to meet the needs of current students, and courses are full then the needs of the program are being met. There may be some students with a particular interest in Philosophy senior courses, and we hope that the Department will be open to permitting those students to enrol in specific circumstances.

**Recommendation #4:** We recommend that large classes (especially new ones intended to decolonize the curriculum) not be placed in 8:30am time slots.

**Unit Response:** We agree, we have low enrolment, attendance, and participation during 8:30am time slots. For most of our students, this is one of the worst times to be in class. This year, the Faculty of Arts was helpful in accommodating this request and we will continue to advocate for course schedules that meet the needs of our students. We have no 8:30am classes for the next academic year, and our hope is that we will be able to maintain such a schedule for subsequent years.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts will do all it can to support scheduling of courses at times when students will attend!

**Recommendation #5:** The reviewers recommend that the Department continue to monitor developments in artificial intelligence, so that it can ensure AI does not become a barrier to teaching and learning.

**Unit Response:** We agree. This is a crucial challenge we and our colleagues at other institutions are facing. After an extensive discussion at our annual department retreat, we have decided to form a departmental committee whose work will be to monitor this situation, as well as update the department on university strategies and recommendations as we make our way through this new AI challenge.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts recognizes the enormous challenges posed by AI, and continues to work with University units to develop effective responses.

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:** Perhaps this is slightly peripheral to the Recommendation, but I will take this opportunity to alert the Department to the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies new guiding document entitled "Artificial Intelligence: Considerations for Graduate Research". The document contains critical questions and suggested approaches on the potential use of Gen AI to enhance graduate research. Included is a 'conversation guide' that aims to facilitate discussion between supervisors and graduate students, ultimately leading to mutually agreed upon informed and proactive decisions. The document is available on the FGPS webpage": <https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/sites/faculty-of-graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/responsibilities/Pages/advising.aspx>,

**Recommendation #6:** The main recommendation is to hire new faculty to replace the four who are due to retire in the next five years, and ideally three more to bring the complement up to the ten who were teaching at the time of the last program review. Given the needs of running the program, the hires should each be able to (1) teach at the upper level and do research in one of the 'core' areas needed to support the major requirements, and (2) teach at the upper level and do research in an area that would in some substantial way 'diversify' the current curriculum. There was a time when candidates who could do both were few and far between, but that time has passed and looking for new hires that satisfy both desiderata is not unrealistic.

**Unit Response:** This is our most pressing concern: the sustainability of our thriving undergraduate program and vibrant student community in the next 5 years, we will be left with 3 full-time members if retirements are not replaced. We could not deliver the quality of student educational experience and depth of education, and sense of community, with only 3 full-time members. As importantly, we believe that Philosophy is integral to any institute of higher education; it is uniquely situated to address deep differences in fundamental questions of ethics, epistemology, logic, and ontology at the heart of various issues: from questions of assisted death to questions about the nature of the Rule of Law and democracy, to questions of consciousness, responsibility, and AI. Our courses in ethics, social and political philosophy, feminist philosophy, human rights and diversity, multiculturalism, social epistemology, and the philosophy of the environment provide valuable opportunities for students to develop as informed and active citizens of a diverse world. We thus agree with the Reviewers that we cannot continue do so without replacing the upcoming retirements.

In order to remain competitive as a Department of Philosophy we would need faculty members trained in: Ethics, including competency in Chinese ethical theories; Philosophy of Mind and Consciousness, with competency in Indian philosophies of consciousness; a faculty member in the History of Philosophy (other than ancient Greek,

and European Medieval); and one faculty in social and political philosophy (e.g., that will work in an area such as Climate philosophy, AI, feminism, and race/cultural philosophies). We are ready at a moment's notice to advertise once full-time positions are made available to our department.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** This program review has drawn attention to the needs of the Department as it faces faculty retirements. We will work with the Provost & VPA to respond to this reality and to try to replace faculty with suitable new hires in over the next five years.

**Recommendation #7.** We weren't able to get firm numbers from the existing faculty, but it sounds like most of these retirements will be coming together towards the end of the next five years, and it would be better if the new hires started before then so that all of the new hiring didn't need to be done at once. (Or at least be done so that the hiring is done the year before the retirement so that there is no year when the faculty is short staffed.)

**Unit Response:** This is a matter of urgency; we would like to avoid a situation in which 4 of our 7 members retire within the same 2 years, which is likely to be the case. In such a situation, our program would have a challenge in being sustainable and it would leave philosophy majors and our Sussex Law students without the necessary courses to complete their degree, apart from other difficulties in staffing courses upon which the Faculty of Arts and the University depend. We thus make an appeal to the Faculty of Arts and Administration at Laurier to be proactive in the regard of providing replacement of upcoming full-time positions for Philosophy.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** This recommendation is noted and will be taken into account as we plan for the coming years.

**Recommendation #8:** We recommend that additional support be given for the Administrative Assistant, including (a) more opportunities for professional development, particularly relating to student wellness, student support, de-escalation, and crisis management, (b) the acquisition of some sort of PDF Editing Software, (c) the creation of an Administrative Handbook covering the position's tasks and resources.

**Unit Response:** We welcome all opportunities and support for our Administrative Assistant for training in student wellness, and in de-escalation and crisis management, especially because she is often in the front line of student queries. Recently, we learned that Ms. Nechita attended the Assistants' Retreat in May 2025 to discuss best practices. There is also a new university wide PDF editing software license available to Laurier faculty and staff, which is helpful. In addition, we are informed that there is in progress a creation of an Administrative Handbook through the Faculty of Arts office. We welcome more opportunities for workshops and professional development for our Administrative Assistant and we will monitor any such opportunities as they become available.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts appreciates that attention has been drawn to this matter. A new Manager for Administrative Assistants in Arts will mean that we are now able to respond specifically to the needs of individuals such as Ms. Nechita.

**Recommendation #9:** We recommend that the Department advocate for its seminar classes to be scheduled in rooms more conducive to this teaching format.

**Unit Response:** We agree, we usually receive one of two rooms for our seminars, which have no windows, are small, crowded and stuffy, and have “clinical” lighting. We would note that such a physical environment can actually hinder attention, cause fatigue, and undermine learning and participation. We need classrooms that are bright, with windows, and natural lighting and good ventilation to support the well-being of our students. We are thus monitoring this situation to find more appropriate physical spaces for our seminars; these seminars are a crucial part of our program.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** Scheduling of classes is an ongoing challenge. We will do our best to support Departmental requests for appropriate spaces.

**Recommendation #10:** We recommend that the Department return their logic class to the computer lab.

**Unit Response:** We agree, our logic course has been designed to be in an active learning classroom/computer lab. Our formal logic course is regularly taught by Dr. Rusin, who has worked to increase retention in the course by implementing a mastery grading approach, as well as collaborative learning, where students work together, hands-on, in-class, to solve various logic problems and proofs. This approach benefit students in a number of ways – and the increase in achievement and grades over the last few years provides good evidence that this pedagogical approach is working. The Active Learning Classroom/Computer lab is specifically designed to promote student collaboration, participation, and discussion. With round tables and movable seating and numerous white boards, it is well-suited for this approach to symbolic logic; it facilitates active discussion and peer learning. We will continue to request that the logic course be scheduled in this room each year.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts supports this request. Specific courses can be assigned to the classrooms in question.

**Recommendation # 11:** We recommend that, *if* there is enough hiring so that the faculty complement could be maintained, with the coming retirements, within the range of the 7 they have now and the (ideally) 10 they had at the time of the last report, the department consider restarting the MA program. Given the issues both in terms of enrolment pressures and resource shortages that lead to the current hiatus, we would recommend the that the department consider.

- a. Modifying the existing 4<sup>th</sup> year courses so that 4 of the 5 seminar courses required in addition to the MA research seminar be “twinned” with the existing 4<sup>th</sup> year course (a possibility considered on p. 76 of the self-study), and the non-twinned course be offered in the fall and required of all MA students, so that they would have one “MA only” seminar each semester. Given that the 4<sup>th</sup> year classes are already almost at capacity, this might require a slight increase to the amount of courses at the 4<sup>th</sup> year, but expanding the course offerings at that level is already something that the undergraduate program would benefit from (see p. 49 of self-study).

- b. Expand the focus of the MA program beyond “Self, Agency, and Community”. As the self study notes, (p. 36) “only a few other Philosophy MA programs with a thematic focus”, and the current specialization was created for a department from which only about 30% of the members will remain in 5 years.
- c. MA recruitment is extremely sensitive to funding, and Laurier’s funding lately has not been especially competitive (see p. 73-74), and unless the enrolment targets (p. 72) are reduced, it may be worth delaying the re-introduction of the program until those funding levels have increased.

**Unit Response:**

- a. This is an excellent strategy. The Department is supportive of twinned fourth year / MA courses as a mechanism of offering the graduate program as efficiently as possible. We do need to be mindful of which courses to twin, as our undergraduate students sometimes do their MA in our department as well. In addition, we recognize that there are regulations regarding the number of courses that can be twinned. Given these two qualifications, we believe that this strategy will be a crucial part of reinstating our MA.
- b. We agree that this thematic focus may no longer be reflective of the expertise of the current faculty complement. We also understand that several other graduate programs have removed their fields of specialization. Such a focus limits the number of potential applicants to our MA. We will make this change when we re-launch the program.
- c. We will carefully examine the issue of funding when re-starting the program. When preparing to re-open, we will work with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to ensure that the funding package offered to students is as competitive as possible.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** As the Dean of Arts works with the Department to hire new faculty, it will support further investigation into the suitability of restarting the MA program.

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:**

- a. I am supportive of twinning 4<sup>th</sup> year / MA courses, so long as there is clear expectations and requirements commensurate with the graduate level (MA) version of the course. I anticipate that this will become increasingly more common for some programs to address declining resources. The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance provides the following guideline, in support of good practice: “*OCGS believes that the number of undergraduate courses or combined courses in which undergraduate students predominate should be not more than one third of the total course requirement for the degree*” (see: <https://oucqa.ca/guide/graduate-programs-two-thirds-requirement/>).
- b. I support the Department’s response.
- c. If the MA program was in operation for 2025-2026, funding packages would be as follows: 2GTAs = \$12,337 + graduate scholarship = \$4500. Total = \$16,837. As noted in the Self-Study, the program would have one Prestige Scholarship (\$5000) that they could award to a highly qualified applicant. As also noted in the Self-Study, applicants to this program are eligible to apply for external scholarships including the SSHRC Canada Graduate Research Scholarship at the Master’s level, now valued at

\$27,000 for one year, and the OGS (\$15,000 for one year). I encourage faculty to continue to pursue research grants and incorporate funding to support graduate students in their budgets, to enhance their recruitment efforts.

**Recommendation #12:** We recommend that the Department do a little more to prepare students for post-graduate life, including (1) offering orientation sessions for those interested in applying to law school or graduate programs, (2) giving the staff at career services a little more instruction about the needs and interests of Philosophy students, since their advice for both job and co-op placement didn't seem especially well suited for them.

**Unit Response:** We agree, and we recognize the need to do more to prepare our students with post-graduate life. The Department proposes to:

- a. Re-start our practice of offering Fall workshops on how to apply to grad school, OGS scholarships, as well as law school.
- b. The Chair has initiated contact with Ms. Susan Campbell at Career Services to discuss needs and interests of philosophy graduates. They will meet to analyse philosophy student needs and resources available.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts supports this recommendation.

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:** As the Department may be aware, the Career Development Centre, with the support of faculty and staff from FGPS, offers programming to senior undergraduates annually at the end of October that includes sessions on 'Applying to Graduate Studies' and 'Applying for Scholarships'. Please encourage your senior undergraduates to attend these sessions. Our staff are also available to provide a scholarship application session directly to your senior undergraduate students. If interested, please contact Deborah Russell (Financial Aid & Awards Officer, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies).

**Recommendation # 13:** Continue looking for ways to enhance the experiences of student, staff and faculty alike, by trying to be open to new ways to develop and maintain the philosophical community at WLU.

**Unit Response:** We have an outstanding student community in the Philosophy Department; indeed, this is one of our success stories. Our students hold weekly meetings, invite guest speakers, and lead seminars. Our majors can regularly be found in our lively Philosophy Lounge talking philosophy and helping each other with parsing arguments and going through logic proofs together (- indeed, we note this year that a number of students were independently working on Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem). We continue to build community with our continuous mentoring of majors, our welcoming faculty, special events and gatherings, and the Philosophy Lounge. Moreover, we have decided that the Chair and Administrative Assistant will meet with the President of the Philosophy Club once a semester to discuss ideas and possible events.

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Dean of Arts appreciates ways in which the Department fosters a healthy student community while also engaging with the wider university. We will support ongoing efforts as much as possible.

## PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Department of Philosophy comprises a small but very committed group of faculty who work very hard to ensure the delivery of a high-quality undergraduate program that reflects their wide and extensive research expertise. There is an openness to exploring thoughtful but innovative ways to deliver content to an ever-changing demographic that is the student body today. The Department is collegial and works very well together, while being open to constructive engagement to the rest of the Faculty of Arts and the Dean of Arts Office. It is to be congratulated on its hard work!

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:** To its credit and under challenging resource circumstances, the Department has focused on enhancing and delivering its undergraduate program in a manner that is well-aligned with institutional goals embedded in its strategies. Notably, the External Reviewers acknowledge and highlight: *"The Department has diversified its curriculum to achieve transformative education. The Department's small faculty is itself diverse, with more than half being women or people of colour. The Department has fostered a strong sense of community among its students, faculty and staff. Based on the student surveys included in the Self-Study, former students believe that the Department prepared them for whatever futures might lie before them."*

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

**Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts:** The Department faces challenges as it faculty begin to retire. It is the responsibility of the Dean of Arts to work with the Provost and VP Academic to address this proactively in the coming years. Without adequate human resources, the Department will not be able to maintain the quality of its program.

**Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:** FGPS remains in support of the Department resuming the MA program when and if sufficient resources allow for it. Again, I will refer to the External Reviewers who comment: *"Finally, a word on the MA program. At the time of the visit, the MA program in Philosophy at WLU was suspended. Because it was not active, the reviewers cannot comment on it. The only point the reviewers will make about the MA program is that they are confident in the ability of the WLU faculty to run a successful MA program if or when they decide to reactivate it."*

## SIGNATURES

Dr. Heidi Northwood

September 30, 2025



## APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: November 7, 2025

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee:

Submitted to Senate (for information):

Implementation Report Due Date:

## RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

*The following Implementation Plan was created by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as part of the Decanal Response.*

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> If the MA program is resumed, the Department should utilize previous admissions requirements when evaluating applications from prospective students.	Department		n/a	
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> We recommend that the Department continue its effort to diversify the curriculum, though we recognize that this may not be possible without new hires. (See p. 39 of the self-study for two recent attempts by the Department to do this, though, unfortunately, the proposed hires were not approved.)	Department		Ongoing	
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> We recommend that the 3rd and 4th year courses remain restricted to Philosophy majors. Both faculty and students take these to be essential parts of the program and the sense of community, and since they are almost fully enrolled, there seems to be no financial need to open them up. (Indeed, doing so might make them	Department		Ongoing	

unavailable for majors who need them to graduate).				
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> We recommend that large classes (especially new ones intended to decolonize the curriculum) not be placed in 8:30am time slots.	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	
<b>Recommendation #5:</b> The reviewers recommend that the Department continue to monitor developments in artificial intelligence, so that it can ensure AI does not become a barrier to teaching and learning.	Department		Ongoing	
<b>Recommendation #6:</b> The main recommendation is to hire new faculty to replace the four who are due to retire in the next five years, and ideally three more to bring the complement up to the ten who were teaching at the time of the last program review. Given the needs of running the program, the hires should each be able to (1) teach at the upper level and do research in one of the 'core' areas needed to support the major requirements, and (2) teach at the upper level and do research in an area that would in some substantial way 'diversify' the current curriculum. There was a time when candidates who could do both were few and far between, but that time has passed and	Dean of Arts	Provost	2030	

looking for new hires that satisfy both desiderata is not unrealistic.				
<b>Recommendation #7:</b> We weren't able to get firm numbers from the existing faculty, but it sounds like most of these retirements will be coming together towards the end of the next five years, and it would be better if the new hires started before then so that all of the new hiring didn't need to be done at once. (Or at least be done so that the hiring is done the year before the retirement so that there is no year when the faculty is short staffed.)	Department/Dean of Arts	Provost		
<b>Recommendation #8:</b> We recommend that additional support be given for the Administrative Assistant, including (a) more opportunities for professional development, particularly relating to student wellness, student support, de-escalation, and crisis management, (b) the acquisition of some sort of PDF Editing Software, (c) the creation of an Administrative Handbook covering the position's tasks and resources.	Dean of Arts		2026	
<b>Recommendation #9:</b> We recommend that the Department advocate for its seminar classes to be scheduled in rooms more conducive to this teaching format.	Department/Dean of Arts		Ongoing	

Recommendation #10: We recommend that the Department return their logic class to the computer lab.	Department		2026	
Recommendation # 11: We recommend that, if there is enough hiring so that the faculty complement could be maintained, with the coming retirements, within the range of the 7 they have now and the (ideally) 10 they had at the time of the last report, the department consider restarting the MA program. Given the issues both in terms of enrolment pressures and resource shortages that lead to the current hiatus, we would recommend the that the department consider. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Modifying the existing 4<sup>th</sup> year courses so that 4 of the 5 seminar courses required in addition to the MA research seminar be “twinned” with the existing 4<sup>th</sup> year course (a possibility considered on p. 76 of the self-study), and the non-twinned course be offered in the fall and required of all MA students, so that they would have one “MA only” seminar each semester. Given that the 4<sup>th</sup> year classes are already almost at capacity, this might require a slight increase to the amount of courses at the 4<sup>th</sup> year,</li> </ul>	Department/Dean of Arts		2030	

<p>but expanding the course offerings at that level is already something that the undergraduate program would benefit from (see p. 49 of self-study).</p> <p>b. Expand the focus of the MA program beyond “Self, Agency, and Community”. As the self study notes, (p. 36) “only a few other Philosophy MA programs with a thematic focus”, and the current specialization was created for a department from which only about 30% of the members will remain in 5 years.</p> <p>c. MA recruitment is extremely sensitive to funding, and Laurier’s funding lately has not been especially competitive (see p. 73-74), and unless the enrolment targets (p. 72) are reduced, it may be worth delaying the re-introduction of the program until those funding levels have increased.</p>				
<p><b>Recommendation #12:</b> We recommend that the Department do a little more to prepare students for post-graduate life, including (1) offering orientation sessions for those interested in applying to law school or</p>	Department		2026	

graduate programs, (2) giving the staff at career services a little more instruction about the needs and interests of Philosophy students, since their advice for both job and co-op placement didn't seem especially well suited for them.				
<b>Recommendation # 13:</b> Continue looking for ways to enhance the experiences of student, staff and faculty alike, by trying to be open to new ways to develop and maintain the philosophical community at WLU.	Department		Ongoing	