Academic Program Review
Summary of Review

Department: History in Art
Faculty: Fine Arts
Date of Report: February 2009

The APRC was extremely impressed by the quality of History in Art’s academic programs. They describe it as a “well designed curricula for students at both undergraduate and graduate levels with an array of solid historical surveys and provocative topical studies” and the courses seem to be framed around sophisticated theorized thinking. Two programmatic strengths are apparent – its coverage of the art history field is unusually well-balanced in geographic reach and in its approach to the study of art and material culture, courses consistently stress social and political contexts and transnational cultural interactions. The department attracts diverse groups of students through its unusually broad coverage of artistic traditions in its courses. The students mentioned how much they value the breadth of courses offered and were positive about the quality of instruction. The APRC commends the Provost’s Office on its decision to endow the History in Art with the Williams Legacy Chair. Through this chair the APRC feels that students’ learning may be further enriched through its mandate for community based research programs. A review of CVs makes clear that everyone on faculty is a thoroughly accomplished and productive scholar further supported by an impressive level of external funding. The APRC’s recommendations are focused on potential for growth and with maintaining the high quality of research and teaching already demonstrated by the department.

The Dean is pleased to report that the Department is taking the recommendations of the APRC seriously and discussions and plans to implement recommendations are underway.

The external review committee provided some clear recommendations for possible further growth including expansion of the film program, moving the current Cultural Resource Management program in to the department (from Continuing Studies) as part of the Master’s program, and establishing a concentration in American-Canadian cross-cultural art forms.

The APRC noted that both sessional faculty and students needed a stronger voice in departmental discussions and needed to be better informed about decisions reached by the regular faculty. They also made suggestions for minor changes in the overall curricular offerings including the suggestion that there should be at least two stand-alone graduate courses per year. The Dean strongly supports these suggestions as they would require only minimal changes to current practice and result in better programs of study for both undergraduate and graduate students. The APRC also recommended a greater emphasis on experiential studies which is a university strategic initiative.

The APRC felt that faculty members were tightly stretched. They urged either rotating time-release for research or reduced teaching loads. The Dean advised that the entire Faculty of Fine Arts will be considering a workload policy that would address this matter.

Finally, the APRC suggested that additional funds be provided to the slide digitization project currently underway. While funding for this project has been supplied to the department in each of the last 3 years, the Dean and Provost were pleased to be able to commit a further $10,000 in the 2009/10 budget towards the completion of this project.

The Dean and Provost are very pleased the results of History in Art’s review. They agree that the department is serving students well with a globally oriented curriculum, rigorous writing requirements, and a clear focus on art and material culture. Both administrative offices note that the APRC is unequivocal in their assessment that the department deserves superior ranking, and compares favourably with programs at Queen’s University and Carleton University.