The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) considers the Department of History at UVic a strong and admirably cohesive unit that has made a significant contribution to historical scholarship in Canada and beyond. Based on enrolment figures and student evaluations, the Department presents a strong record of teaching effectiveness. The undergraduate and graduate programs combine flexibility and quality, with an appropriate emphasis on method as well as substance. Overall, the APRC ranks the Department among the best mid-sized History Departments in Canada. However the Department faces considerable challenges which will require imagination and initiative if it is to maintain this ranking in the years to come. Accordingly, the APRC makes a number of recommendations to assist the Department with these challenges.

On the recommendation to strategize about how to communicate and more effectively promote achievements and civic mission both internally and externally, the Department is keen to work together with the Dean and the University’s executive offices. The Department is currently working with the Dean’s office to organize a seminar for faculty on ways to communicate effectively with the media. The APRC made reference to the Department’s “traditional complexion” but the Department feels they have already crossed some traditional borders in teaching and to some extent in research. However, the Department will profile itself by its major thematic concentrations on its website and in its promotional brochures.

The APRC’s recommendation to strike a curriculum committee to review undergraduate offerings (specifically required and perquisites for upper level courses) and the long-range balance desired between offerings related to various areas of the world and thematic approaches resulted in much discussion at a Departmental retreat following the review. The Department will endeavour to introduce incrementally widening opportunity for Majors and Honours students to learn historical methods, and has instructed the planning committee to explore ways to achieve this goal. The Department also plans, in the following year, to introduce one new lower-level course in historical writing and reactivate an existing upper-level course in historical editing.

In response to the APRC’s recommendation to build further strength in Humanities Computing, the Department will introduce a graduate course in Digital History in 2009-10. However, the Department feels that the APRC’s recommendation to hire in the area of digital humanities would further enhance an already demonstrated excellence in this area. Such a hire would also preclude the Department’s ability to diversify and enrich the existing concentration in world history which is clearly articulated in its Strategic Plan.

The Dean of Humanities is confident that the Department’s responses to the APRC’s recommendations give full attention to the issues of curriculum and strategic direction. The responses are sensible and proactive and they are also addressing issues related to equity. The Dean also confirms that the Department has gained considerable additional space in the recent building reallocation which was also recommended by the APRC. However, he clarifies that the Department already has a reading room that serves as a commons room to the extent that colleagues wish to use for that purpose. There is no designated “meeting space” within the department (just as is true for other departments within the Faculty).

The Office of the Provost concurs with the Dean’s assessment of the Department’s responses as being thoughtful and appropriate.