

**External Review of the Department of Critical Studies
Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies, University of British Columbia - Okanagan
October 2014**

Introduction

The Review Committee included Professors Diana Brydon (University of Manitoba), Eleanor Ty (Wilfrid Laurier University), and Heather Zwicker (University of Alberta). We met with representatives of the University and the Department of Critical Studies on October 8, 9, and 10, 2014. We would like to thank everyone who hosted us and met with us during this period for their hospitality and their willingness to share their views with us. Special thanks go to the coordinator of our review, Kenneth Phillips. In constructing the comments that follow, we note that this is the first review that has been conducted of this department.

Overview

The review committee was impressed by the commitment of the faculty to their students and programs, the seriousness of their engagement with the process, and the energy they brought to thinking about how to make their Faculty Strategic Plan *Soaring to New Heights* (2012-2017) work. Members of the department have clearly devoted much time and energy to undergraduate curricular reform, restructuring efforts, the provision of new graduate programs, and community outreach. The last ten years have seen enormous growth in student numbers and many new hires. The achievements have been considerable, but ten years of continuous transformation have taken their toll. In our view, the department now stands at a crossroads, where they face some difficult choices as to the future priorities they wish to set. The period of intense rebuilding is over. Student numbers are no longer growing across the board. Student interests seem to be changing. Globally, Humanities disciplines are under pressure, and in British Columbia, changes are underway that may put these disciplines under further pressure. FCCS has a new Dean whose leadership they welcome. He is working to consolidate some of what has been achieved, coordinate workload across programs and the two departments, and encourage research clusters built around faculty strengths across disciplinary boundaries. It is time for members of the department to take stock of where they are and where they want to be in the next five and ten years. They have begun that process and we support its continuation.

The jointly created FCCS Strategic Plan sets an ambitious agenda: “Within the next five years, the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies will become a nationally recognized leader in disciplinary and interdisciplinary creative and critical scholarship and teaching that encompasses diverse global, historical, and contemporary experiences and perspectives. It will attract excellent graduate and undergraduate students from Canada and around the world and

will serve as a nexus for communities and leading scholars who share in our mission.” While the Strategic Plan itemizes perceived strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, more work will be needed to translate these goals into reality, especially given these times of financial constraints and a changing national and global higher education framework. This review addresses only the efforts of the Department of Critical Studies to advance this vision, while recognizing that cooperation across these two departments will be necessary to its full realization.

History, Interdisciplinarity, and the Distinctiveness of the Department of Critical Studies

Critical Studies is one of two departments in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies (FCCS) and comprises five programs: Art History and Visual Culture, Cultural Studies, English, French, and Spanish. There are also two program areas: Japanese Studies and German Studies. These disciplines do not have a major or minor. Problems arise from the size imbalance across these programs, with English being by far the larger unit. Furthermore, some faculty within Critical Studies believe that there is workload and resource inequity between Creative and Critical Studies within FCCS, making joint cooperation difficult in some cases. In addition, the provision of the BA at UBCO is split between this department and the Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences, which can cause some confusion to those unfamiliar with this particular structure and may make it more difficult for students to develop a strong sense of cohort identification with the Department of Critical Studies.

The Department Self-Study of May 15, 2014 explains some of the history behind the distinctive structure of the FCCS. FCCS was developed in 2005 “with a specific mandate to foster an environment where interdisciplinary scholarship and learning are promoted and where research, practice and teaching are interwoven.” Throughout our meetings with members of the department, we heard a consistent theme: that there was a widespread, if not unanimous, commitment to this interdisciplinary vision, but a recognition that the vision had yet to be achieved. Furthermore, we heard significant disagreement about how that vision might best be realized. Finally, although only a minority of those we met expressed a preference for maintaining discipline-based structures, a larger number of faculty still admitted to thinking mainly within disciplinary contexts when asked about their students or their work. The Self-Study notes that “the Department is gradually finding ways to institute an interdisciplinary and innovative liberal arts education for our students” even as “interdisciplinarity can remain a baffling concept for students.” Our findings confirm this view.

Although the Self-Study does not provide the longer history in which Okanagan University College (OUC) became UBCO, with some faculty moving to a community college and others to the new university, it is mentioned briefly as part of the challenges faced, along with a departmental sense that their work is “undervalued institutionally and our research time

threatened” (65). Through our interviews with individuals, the review committee found that the legacy of this transition continues today, sometimes leading to unhelpful distinctions between those who moved from OUC and more recent hires, and certainly contributing to transition fatigue from the process of continuous transformation. Finally, due to the legacy of the dependent relation to UBC Vancouver, with some aspects of departmental decision-making still delegated to Vancouver, there is a lingering sense of unhappiness about this relation. Despite good intentions and possibly because of many efforts on all fronts of engagement, the department has not yet succeeded in creating the culture of the research university that will be necessary to meet the goals articulated in the Strategic Plan.

We offer comments below on the specific areas laid out in the Terms of Reference.

1. **Undergraduate Education and Student Learning**

As the Self-Study points out, the Department of Critical Studies is a “complex, unique, and multidisciplinary” unit that integrates a number of programs and disciplines that share an affinity for literature and the arts, as well as a desire, where possible, to break disciplinary boundaries in teaching and research. The undergraduate programs all reveal a tension between, on the one hand, their desire to offer very good programs based on traditional disciplines, and, on the other hand, the wish to be innovative and interdisciplinary. We understand that since the transition in 2005, many programs have been revising their curriculum and expanding course offerings. In the 2012-2013 academic year, programs were further encouraged to undertake extensive program reviews in keeping with the calls of the Strategic Plan to embrace interdisciplinarity and international perspectives. These changes have been positive and practical, and, if members are revising course offerings, we encourage continuing attempts to align teaching with the established strengths in the four areas, namely: Eco cultures; New Media and Digital Cultures; Cultural Literacies and Practices; and Postcolonial Imaginaries. However, given the numerous changes that have already taken place, we are hesitant to recommend full-scale program changes.

Enrolment

The number of majors in Critical Studies’ programs has been steady since 2009 with course enrollments peaking in 2012. The slight drop in 2013 is in keeping with national trends. One impediment to enrolment and recruitment statistics mentioned in the Self-Study and by faculty members is that there is no direct entry into the programs of Critical Studies. However, we heard conflicting accounts of the rules governing the declaration of majors, with some suggesting that students decline to declare a major early by habit rather than by regulation. **We recommend that students be encouraged to declare a major by the end of Year 1, in order to foster a greater sense of belonging to the cohort and community.**

Honours English currently has few students. This is a problem across the country. If the program wants to increase its enrolments in upper year courses, the program could consider making it slightly easier for students to do the degree by one or more of the following: lowering the minimum grade of 80%, allowing one or two courses to be double counted with another program, and/or easing the historical period requirements. There are a couple of lively new Interdisciplinary, DH, and animal studies additions, and the program could consider offering one or two popular genre courses to attract more students.

Teaching/Curriculum

Many faculty members have fascinating research areas that could be translated into wonderful courses at the undergrad and graduate level. This may mean a few more topics-oriented courses rather than those defined by geographical categories or historical periods, e.g., life writing, travel narratives, animals, revolution. In language courses, as we have heard, faculty members are trying different ways to allow students who are not linguistically competent to take upper level courses, perhaps by allowing submissions in the language of study for some students, and work done in English for others. Films are a good way to allow access to diverse cultures, as well as to different historical period. We saw a promising proposal for developing a series of courses in World Literature, which might be developed to complement initiatives in Cultural Studies or broadened to include a wider range of cultural attention. As the FCCS is committed to “an ethos of global awareness and intercultural engagement,” it could continue to use different kinds of “texts,” theories, and methodologies to facilitate connections between research and teaching, between critical and creative studies, within and beyond Critical Studies itself. A major strength for Critical Studies is its potential for closer links with Creative Studies, and a risk is the potential for separating the creative from the critical. We feel that the creativity of critique needs to be recognized and supported. We recommend further thinking about how to **integrate theory and practice, aligning the promotional rhetoric with what the department does and can do, but without necessarily rushing to implement new ideas too quickly.**

The first step, in our view, will be to develop clear administrative structures to enable teaching across disciplines. At the moment, there are no official channels to do this and there is no course recognition for co-teaching; it must be done as overload and each attempt to co-teach must start from scratch. This would apply to participation in GoGlobal as well. To encourage interdisciplinarity, and new forms of creativity, ways need to be found to encourage and reward co-teaching.

Service teaching is a large component of all programs in Critical Studies, but it is particularly onerous for English, and to a lesser extent, French and Spanish. The university-wide

requirement that all students complete two first-year English courses means that all English faculty have to teach 2 first year courses (or half of their load) every year. French, German, Japanese, and Spanish faculty also have larger first year classes than upper level classes because students are required to take a second language for their BA. Most faculty members believe that within their own units, first year teaching is distributed equitably, and a number told us that they enjoy teaching all their classes. These courses could be a place to attract students into higher level courses within the programs.

A huge limitation of our review was the failure to schedule a meeting for us with undergraduate students. The absence of student responses to questionnaires distributed in preparation for the self-study further limits our ability to comment on student curricular preferences. However, experience in other departments of English, modern languages, and art history from across the country suggest that students are no longer enrolling in large numbers in these traditional programs. We did hear from one student who suggested there should be more detailed advising in the early undergraduate years for students seeking to build a program since some third and fourth year courses had prerequisites for which it was necessary to plan ahead. This necessary early advising could be facilitated by allowing earlier entry into the Department of Critical Studies.

We heard several contradictory proposals for possible curricular futures for offerings within the Department. Some of these might be configured to complement one another; others seemed incompatible. As proposals for strengthening enrolment in senior courses, we heard that some of the modern languages might focus on linguistics, which has healthy enrolments, rather than on literature. Cultural Studies has healthy enrolments and we heard two somewhat contradictory reactions to this: a complaint that the ideological model for Cultural Studies was too restrictive (enshrining only the Birmingham model), thereby restricting some from offering alternative models of Cultural Studies within the program; and a different complaint that Cultural Studies was marginalizing more traditional models of literary study. Still, Cultural Studies is a highly successful program in terms of student numbers, and offers much potential for growth. The global awareness and cross-disciplinary openness evident in the revised Art History program also struck us as a positive model, and the World Lit proposal builds on strength in more than one program, and could encourage more intercultural engagement. However, these discrete successes may not be readily translatable to all areas of the Department of Critical Studies. At the end of the day, the department itself needs to answer questions about future curricula, in the context of a slowdown in hiring and declining numbers in some programs.

Quality Assurance

Just before our arrival at UBCO, we were sent several model course outlines. These were helpful and in themselves, raised no concerns. **Future self-study documents should incorporate more of these and document their role within larger program pathways or service functions.**

In order to deal with concerns about grade inflation, we recommend that the Head approve final course grades before they are submitted, to ensure consistency within and between different programs.

Pre-tenure faculty should not be asked to peer evaluate pre-tenure faculty teaching. We understand that there is a limited number of faculty in Critical Studies, but would submit that people in other units (including other Faculties) could usefully evaluate teaching.

2. Graduate Education and Training

The Department of Critical Studies, with a faculty complement of approximately 40, has an ambitious graduate agenda, offering an MA in English, an MA in IGS, and a PhD in IGS. The number of English MAs seems to be a little more than half of the total MAs which is in keeping with faculty complement. According to the Self-Study, the number of graduate students peaked in 2012, and declined very slightly in 2013, in keeping with national trends. The number of students accepted into the various programs seems to be appropriate to the faculty complement, as we assume that the College of Graduate Studies would approve only active scholars as members.

From our conversations with faculty members and graduate students, and from the list of graduate courses in Appendix iv, there seems to be an effort to offer a wide range of courses that would be suitable to English, Cultural Studies, and, to a lesser extent, Modern Language students. However, students noted the difficulty of finishing the coursework MA in one year given that there were few course options. We heard complaints that at one point there were few (or no) courses for students in Art History. (A student did acknowledge that s/he learned from those courses which were mainly geared towards English students even though s/he was not in that field.) Given the umbrella-like structure of IGS, specialized courses for those in Latin American, French, Spanish, or early periods in English literature are more difficult to mount. Directed Studies is one way of offering more specialized courses, but it robs seminars of potential participants. Instead, the department might consider slightly broader topics in faculty members' areas of expertise (many of which might be attractive to fourth-year undergraduates).

Graduate students we spoke with felt that the strength of the department was in its people and that the weakness was in the rules governing programs. Policies (e.g., word limits for comprehensive exams) were different for different students going through the same year. Confusion persists around the question of how SSHRC doctoral awards are ranked and reranked. We laud the past and ongoing efforts of the Graduate Programs Planning Committee to create rules and policies in the Graduate Handbook to help students proceed successfully through their MA years. Students and faculty concur that things are getting better as the programs are maturing, but we do recommend that **policies and guidelines for progression through MA and PhD should be posted and kept up to date.**

We were pleased to see that students have been successful in getting external grants, such as the SSHRC MA and Doctoral fellowships. UBCO has now dedicated \$50,000 a year for graduate student scholarships in an effort to make competitive offers. The amounts of scholarship, approximately \$9000-\$12,000 for a PhD student and between \$3,000-\$6,000 for an MA are good and at par with other universities.

We were not given graduate completion rates, so we are unable to assess student success rates. Impressionistically, we found MA times to completion to be on par with national peers and PhDs to be somewhat long by comparison with humanities programs elsewhere in the country, in part because of the complexity of interdisciplinary degrees. We were also not able to assess the placement track record because this data is not gathered at the department level. (This is a problem across North America.) Especially given the constraints on the academic job market, we strongly recommend that **the Department of Critical Studies should track graduate student placement after completion of degrees.**

We heard that professionalization seminars are run for MA students only. If this is correct, then **a professionalization seminar or workshops should also be run for doctoral students, since their needs will be different.**

The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Miriam Grant praised the department for being a model in Graduate studies for its organization and delivery of programs, for offering core methods and theory courses for all graduate students. There is an effort to spread the work of supervision across the unit, although some flexibility might be encouraged; for instance, the rule of 2 PhD students per faculty member might be bent depending on the stage of the PhD students. We are of the view that the single most important qualification for graduate supervision is research activity.

Quality Assurance: The department should ensure that graduate faculty maintain their research profiles appropriate to working with graduate students and that courses for graduate students, including those addressing professionalization, be taught by qualified graduate faculty.

3. Research

The Department of Critical Studies has a broad range of research activity. In the FCCS Strategic Plan, four established areas of research strength are identified: Eco Cultures, New Media and Digital Cultures, Cultural Literacies and Practices, and Postcolonial Imaginaries. We endorse these areas of strength. We can see how faculty members' research would fit into one or more of these categories. However, it was apparent from our discussions that faculty do not always see their own work here as easily. We judge these interdisciplinary areas of strength to be particularly useful as a mechanism for reinvigorating stalled research careers and providing a supportive team-based context for all department members. We appreciate their value as venues for seed funding, publication subventions and seminar series, and believe that over time clusters will become more closely attuned to the ways faculty see their work.

Grants and Research Funding

The Department of Critical Studies has a solid record of external grants. (We have largely ignored internal grants given the difficulty of assessing how competitive these are.) Faculty members have capitalized on a broad range of funding possibilities, including SSHRC Standard Research Grants, SSHRC Insight Grants, SSHRC Research Creation, and SSHRC CURA. The SSHRC Partnership Grant (in process) is commendably ambitious. We also wish to note faculty members' success with external bodies including the Max Planck Institute, the British Academy and Fulbright.

Quality and Quantity of Research Activity

It must be noted that our evaluation was somewhat hampered by the fact that all CVs were abridged and several were missing. At the top end are some truly outstanding achievements, including faculty with multiple monographs to their credit; impressive international collaborations; a Fulbright; and a CFI. The most active scholars are publishing in top national field journals, such as *Canadian Literature*, *English Studies in Canada*, *Topia*, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, and *Victorian Review*. There is less publication in international journals of record, but there is some (*a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *eHumanista*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, e.g.). Total monograph publication is somewhat lower than one might see at institutions of similar size, but this is not surprising considering the departmental demographics and the history of transition from Okanagan University College. From 2008-2013 the department has seen the production of 19 monographs and 11 edited or co-edited books, which is a very

respectable number for a faculty complement of 40. The monographs and edited collections produced by DCS faculty are with good to very good presses like Ashgate, Duke UP, McGill-Queen's UP, Palgrave Macmillan, Pearson, Routledge, University of Toronto Press, Universidad Complutense de Madrid Press, and Wilfrid Laurier UP. Many in the Instructor rank are active publishers, too.

Although of good quality, research output is uneven in the unit. Some faculty members are highly productive, while there are faculty members in the research stream who have not published much. This unevenness has caused some bitterness, and has raised questions about whether faculty members with lower research productivity ought to carry higher teaching loads. The new "FCCS Framework Guidelines for Faculty Workload, Expectations and Merit/PSA" document is extremely important. We urge the Department Head and the Faculty Dean to **implement the provisions of the Workload document, so as to establish accountability for research time and ensure equitable workloads across the department.**

4. Community Engagement

The Self-Study documents that the Department of Critical Studies has established and sustained connections in the local community through a variety of efforts, some run by the department and others by individual persons and programs within it. The faculty also has a community advisory board, which acts as a two-way conduit between community groups and university programs. Critical Studies has offered a Community Lecture Series. With the support of an endowment, Cultural Studies hosts an annual speaker. They also sponsor several year-long series in collaboration with the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, and work with the Kelowna Immigrant Society and the World Community Film Festival. Cultural Studies and Spanish are experimenting with experiential learning and research assignments involving various local organizations. Spanish and German build links with local Hispanic and German communities and collaborate with the Spanish Embassy in Canada and the local German-Canadian club in Kelowna.

Critical Studies sponsor on-campus and off-campus events to create opportunities to engage with issues related to Indigenous Studies. We are impressed by the number of examples of speaker events, discussion series, course-related events, summer institutes, and symposiums offered, co-organized, and co-sponsored by members of the department to enhance community and Aboriginal Engagement. In recognition of the importance of community engagement to its mission, the faculty has established a Community Engagement Award.

It is clear that the department takes community engagement seriously as part of its mandate and that it is committed to continue building on these successes. While the overall picture in

this regard is very positive, some individual faculty members felt that the huge amount of work devoted to building these relationships and running these events, was not always sufficiently recognized. It was a pleasure to hear from UBCO members outside the Faculty, including a representative from Public Relations, that FCCS is seen to be a leader in the area of community engagement. We urge both departments in FCCS to continue to publicize humanities and fine arts, and we hope that the university sustains this vital work.

We also note that the Department is active in promoting global community, through participating in GoGlobal and offering courses abroad.

5. People

Morale and Institutional Culture

We observed a high degree of collegiality and goodwill across the Department of Critical Studies but this did have its limits. People liked their work, cared about their teaching, their students, and their disciplines, and respected their colleagues, but also expressed frustration about the constraints in which they were working. In general, there was an acceptance of the high service load component of their work. There was widespread agreement that everyone should do their share of first-year teaching. The expressions of commitment to the principle of interdisciplinarity we heard were more mixed, with the majority supportive but some still sceptical. Of those who expressed support for the principle, none felt it had yet been achieved, and many identified significant structural barriers to teaching and working across disciplines. A more serious problem for morale in the department was the anomalous position of English. A few not in English saw English as hegemonic, as voting in a bloc, and did not trust English to represent their interests. Many in English, on the other hand, felt their program was supporting some other units and believed that English was trying hard to accommodate the needs of all, sometimes at the expense of its own programs. Some also saw dangers in Cultural Studies and some in Cultural Studies saw threats to themselves in the initiatives of others. These internal divisions paled, however, when compared to the feeling that the Department was disadvantaged in relation to the Department of Creative Studies. On the positive side, many assured us there was little generational tension within the Department and the new Dean was universally admired.

While the concerns we heard were real, we believe they are exacerbated by the stress of constant transformation and reinvention of the last ten years. The institutional culture of the Department seems to be one of constant busyness, frenzied activity, and fear of being left out of important decisions. There is a real need for some stability, for a pause to reassess the organization of departmental committee structures, and to think about how they might move forward more productively together, perhaps by doing less. Are there layers of function that

could be streamlined? (Please see comments and recommendations below, in the section on Leadership and Administration.) We also heard that so much time was devoted to procedural and management issues, there was little time for addressing intellectual questions or larger questions about the future of disciplines and their graduates.

Although generally it seems that morale is still quite good, we also heard several expressions of discouragement and resignation, especially in relation to teaching assignments and research support. We conclude that the transition was really hard, on both the faculty who straddle the OUC/UBCO system and those who were hired immediately after the transition. One small change that might help improve matters is to **stop referring to “heritage faculty.”** The term “heritage faculty” persists - within and beyond the Department of Critical Studies, FCCS and UBCO more generally. It’s our view that this term introduces unhelpful distinctions. It has a pejorative flavour. You will notice that we do not use this term throughout this review.

We applaud the move toward incorporating more diversity in recent hires, especially in Cultural Studies, and **recommend continued efforts to further diversity wherever possible**, in both hiring and student recruitment.

Equity in Teaching Loads

Lecturers in this unit should not carry a heavier teaching load than lecturers in other units at UBCO or other cognate units at UBC Vancouver. While we understand that courses may have different kinds of assignments, number of class hours, and number of students, it is important for the morale of the faculty to make the rationale for teaching workloads equitable and transparent.

Faculty across ranks

As the self-study and members we met noted, the department is comprised of approximately 40 members, but only one has been appointed to full professor. The dean has devised a mentoring initiative, to get UBCO faculty members linked to faculty on Vancouver campus. This initiative is great, but has not yet been fully realized, according to one or two we asked. We noted that two to three associate professors in Critical Studies have dossiers that are ready to be put forward for promotion to full professor. Members told us that they understood the process, but **we recommend a more vigorous shepherding of people through the promotion process - both from Assistant to Associate and from Associate to Full Professor.**

Students

The committee did not meet with undergraduate students and met with just a few graduate students. However, the graduate students who were able to meet with us were generally happy

with their choice of department and the support of their supervisors, while also noting that their main contact with the department came through their supervisors

Institutional Structure

As noted elsewhere in this report, the relations between the two departments within the FCCS appear to be characterized by friction and to generate a considerable sense of grievance within the Department under review here. The mandate of our review does not allow for our assessment of this matter but it is important to note this division and the low morale it creates. There is a perception of inequity in terms of resource distribution, workload, hiring, course release, recognition for research, and public promotion within the wider community.

6. Physical Infrastructure

The members of the Faculty of Critical and Creative Studies were very recently moved into their own building with a nice big sign announcing their presence. This move allows more interaction between faculty members at the same time as it gives FCCS a bolder presence on campus. The office spaces for faculty members are typical, and proximity to the artistic spaces is a bonus: one faculty member commented that she was able to use the Black Box space, for instance. We did hear that the move entailed the loss of a lounge area outside faculty offices in the old building that encouraged undergraduate students to “hang out” near their professors. While we accept this as a loss, we found (and most faculty members agreed) that assembling all of the FCCS members in a single building outweighed this drawback.

Our guided tour showed a beautifully designed campus with welcoming pedestrian paths and easy walking distance to classrooms which were equipped with multi-media capacities. The library, though originally built to serve a much smaller student body, was well-equipped and well-used as a commons area. We laud the efforts to increase its capacity: it is certainly very well used. We were not provided with a library report, but anecdotally were told that the library was more than adequate to serve the research needs of most faculty members, given that items could be found on-line, or else called from the Vancouver campus. Only one faculty member with a very specialized area commented that it was difficult to get research materials, especially from outside Canada.

We were told that the Language Lab had space for only 32 students – insufficient to accommodate a first-year language class, posing problems for those teaching modern languages and for their students seeking language practice.

We heard a suggestion that there could be better coordination with UBC Vancouver on sharing collection resources. For example, art galleries and museums on the Vancouver campus might

be willing to share their collections on a rotation basis if there was a suitable building on campus at UBCO.

We note these two points but have not made them explicit recommendations since our mandate does not extend to recommending the incurring of further expenses.

We spoke to a few graduate students, one who noted space constraints for TAs. It was reported to us that TAs have to share desks, and were, at one point, told to find their own offices to hold office hours. This is unacceptable, and we understand that the decision was reversed. We note it here only to reinforce our impression that many decisions seem to be made on an ad hoc basis, that clear procedures for handling such matters need to be in place, and that policy should be in place to handle such obvious needs rather than be put in place on a reactive basis. Such basic space assignments should be made by administrative staff, operating on the clear principle that all teachers need confidential space for dealing with their students. Faculty should not be required to find space for their TAs. Space constraints are considerable at universities across Canada. Nonetheless, **it is necessary to provide allocations that provide appropriate professional meeting space to all departmental staff who must meet with students. This includes TAs, instructors, lecturers, professors, and student advisors (both academic and non-academic).**

7. Financial Resources

We do not have sufficient data to offer an exhaustive evaluation (for instance, we did not receive a department budget or terms of reference for the Reichwald endowment). We can make some inferences, however. First, the student to faculty ratio is very good by national standards. Because of the stable environment for Instructors at the UBCO, we consider the student-staff FTE ratios that include sessionals to be more reliable for drawing conclusions about financial resources. From lowest to highest, the student:staff ratios for 2014 run as follows:

GERM	2.4 (Note: this is anomalous.)
JPST	11.3
ARTH	14.25
FREN	15.74
ENGL	16.83
SPAN	18.39
CULT	22.55

There are a few things to state here. First, it is worth noting that with two exceptions, all programs have a lower student to faculty ratio now than they did two years ago. This suggests that there are more faculty, fewer students, or some combination of the two. (FREN has stayed stable, and JPST has increased its student-faculty ratio.) Second, there is a significant and growing divergence between programs. (Please see the year-over-year figures in the Self Study, p 36.) However, it is difficult to predict whether these trends will continue, since we cannot know what the implications of the revised curricula in many programs will be. We urge the Department Head to monitor student-to-staff ratios carefully, as this is one indication as to how resources should be distributed. Third, the median ratio in the Department of Critical Studies is 16:1, which is higher than the overall FCCS average ratio of 14:1. This suggests some unevenness in resource distribution, though there may be pedagogical reasons for this.

Several faculty members pointed to the paucity of course releases for new course preparation, heavy administrative loads, substantial grant preparation, or major research initiatives. It is probably the case that faculty all over Canada would lay claim to additional teaching releases for substantial other work. It is important to know that course release is a materially and symbolically significant resource for faculty members.

8. Leadership and administration

Department organization and administration

Given its six undergraduate program areas and its participation in three graduate degrees, the Department of Critical Studies is a complex unit. The unique history of UBCO, with its roots in a University College, complicates that picture further. However, on balance we find that the governance and (especially) administration within the department is more complex, and therefore more cumbersome, than even that delicate history dictates. It was difficult for us to assess what responsibilities look like on the ground, and to square those impressions with the “FCCS Governance and Administrative Structure” document (appendix ii to the Self Study) - and then to put all of that into the context of UBCO as a whole. At present, it is not always clear who does what, for whom, or why.

There are positive signs that the Department of Critical Studies is addressing this complexity. The context for doing so is positive: we note that faculty members are willing to take on service obligations, and we found the administrative support staff to be hardworking, cheerful and professional. As we say above, we laud and support efforts to rationalize workloads through the “Framework Guidelines for Faculty Workload, Expectations, and Merit/PSA” document. One of the issues we encountered is that many faculty members feel simply overwhelmed by service obligations, even though they take them on for the good of their programs, and their students, and their colleagues. Furthermore, the heavy local workload due to the complexity of the

system also leaves little space for service beyond the department. Very little reference was made to service beyond the departmental level, to national or international research adjudication or to leadership in national or international academic organizations. Such experiences are an important part of building academic community beyond the local institution and providing a sense of context for understanding how local pressures are often consistent with changing conditions elsewhere.

The only feasible way to reduce service obligations while preserving collegial governance is to scrutinize and rationalize the expenditure of colleagues' time. We understand why the department would be committed to representation on committees by rank, by program, and by gender, but we wonder whether this is the most important principle to preserve at a moment when the Department, and indeed the entire UBC system, is emphasizing research productivity and timely progression through the ranks? We also observe that the uneven demography of Critical Studies means that representation by rank will tax some constituencies more than others. Finally, we worry that duplication of effort is not just costly in terms of individual faculty time, but also breeds confusion on crucial questions of where decisions are made and where accountability lies.

We stop short of making specific recommendations for altering administrative assignments and governance, because we recognize that the Department is nested within a Faculty, the Okanagan campus, and the larger UBC system. We also believe that the still-fresh "FCCS Framework Guidelines for Faculty Workload, Expectations and Merit/PSA" represents important work in progress. Nonetheless, although we stop short of specific recommendations, we do raise the following questions for consideration:

- A structure in which "the Head is assisted by an Associate Head, six undergraduate Program Coordinators, two graduate Program Coordinators, two graduate Program Coordinators, two Administrative Assistants and a variety of committees" (Self Study p60) effectively positions over 20% of the department (8+ of 40) as executive positions. Is there a more efficient way of organizing department business? For instance, is the department best served by having six different program coordinators, or could some of this work be shared across disciplinary lines? If so, the department might consider stipulating, as a check/balance against too much consolidation of power in a single unit, that the Head and Associate Head come from different programs.
- Would the department be better served by having fewer committees with more power?
- Can professors in key administrative positions (e.g., program coordinators) call on appropriate administrative assistance from the support staff? We were startled to see how much "administrivia" professors were expected to do for themselves in some cases.

- Are pre-tenure faculty committee assignments appropriate, recognizing that they have to publish in order to get tenure?

Addressing these questions honestly will demand trust in colleagues working in other programs and disciplines; in some cases, they will require trust across Department and Faculty lines. As difficult as that can be, the rewards - greater time for research and teaching, less confusion - merit careful consideration. As a final note: if the department decides to increase any of the already full roles of Head or Associate Head, we would strongly advocate for additional teaching release to enable that person to do the job well.

Leadership

One of the strengths of the Department is that many of its members are former Heads, Associate Deans (or, in one case, a former Dean). This suggests that the department has done a good job of “rehabilitating” administrators at the end of their terms. Unfortunately, and for understandable reasons, we were not able to speak with the outgoing Department Head, who would have been a useful resource on questions of leadership and succession. As noted in the Self-Study, we did not see evidence of thoughtful succession planning. To be fair, this is absent from virtually all Canadian (and probably worldwide) universities. We hope that a number of other projects underway, such as cross-campus mentoring, coaching to Full Professor, analyzing and rationalizing administrative workloads, and so on, might make key administrative jobs more attractive. Currently, resources seem to have been concentrated on getting newer hires through the review and tenure and initial promotion process. However, there is a recognition that attention should now turn toward thinking about promotions to Full Professor, and the support that will be needed to facilitate that transition, for those whose CVs seem to be ready now, and for others who will be moving through the ranks in the future. The Department will benefit greatly from having more Full Professors within its ranks.

9. Future development

We have documented some of the challenges and opportunities facing the Department throughout each section of this report. Because ours is the first review of this relatively new department, we also raise some issues for consideration in compiling future reviews. We heard that timelines for submitting individual reports to our committee were due only a few days after a draft of the Self-Study was distributed and that there were many concerns about how the requirements for the Self-Study were changed during the process, necessitating hasty revision and causing confusion about the purpose and inclusivity of the process. We understand that extenuating circumstances contributed to the confusion. Nonetheless, **we recommend that future reviews provide clear guidelines to those compiling the Self-Study, include more tools of genuine self-study, involving students and staff as well as faculty, and allow more**

time for the preparation of individual responses, from students, staff, and faculty, after preparation of the self-study document.

In summary, we found a generally congenial department, whose members were struggling with an unusual, multi-disciplinary department composed of disparate disciplines of varying sizes and student complement, working within an unusual faculty outside the usual BA structures, at a time of rapid change for universities, and the humanities in particular. The Department structure is unwieldy and there are genuine concerns, which we share, about its ability to function as a department. This unconventional structure also makes it difficult for a sense of student cohort to emerge. Given these challenges and understanding the constraints they produce, we conclude nonetheless that the department is reasonably well-positioned to weather these storms. The structure of the Department and the Faculty in which it is placed pose many challenges which may not easily be resolved. Given the lack of resources for many future initiatives, the Department will have to work with what it has currently in place. In theory, the rhetoric of interdisciplinarity may offer some productive routes forward. In practice, the Department as currently constituted is probably more properly described as multidisciplinary. However, certain transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary initiatives are underway. The challenge will be to find ways of encouraging and sustaining these within limited resources. We have done our best to describe the situation but we cannot chart a route forward through these challenges. Any solutions will need to be negotiated on the ground and come from the faculty members themselves. We can assure them that the challenges they face are not entirely unique to their situation.

On the positive side, the Department's promotion and employment of the IGS structure can distinguish it from most other Canadian universities, and it has made excellent hires in the last few years to strengthen this distinction. The areas of specialization of recent hires augment and extend existing strengths in the UBC system, representing key growth areas of the disciplines. These are high-impact areas that will attract students; they are perfectly suited for interdisciplinarity and building global presence. The Department of Critical Studies has strong personnel, who model the close connection between teaching and research and incorporate a genuine commitment to internationalization within their curricular and research programs. Their work is good. Both research and teaching more than meet Canadian disciplinary standards. The department has a strong base on which to build if it can deal with some of the administrative issues generated by its growing pains and with the diverse interests of its faculty complement.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Encourage undergraduate students to declare a major by the end of Year 1.
2. Develop clear administrative structures to enable teaching across disciplines and to make co-teaching and participation in GoGlobal feasible.
3. The Head should approve final grades.
4. Only tenured faculty should conduct peer evaluations of pre-tenure faculty teaching.
5. Policies and guidelines for progression through MA and PhD degrees should be posted and kept up to date.
6. Graduate student placement after completion of degrees should be tracked.
7. Implement the provisions of the new “FCCS Framework Guidelines for Faculty Workload, Expectations and Merit/PSA” document.
8. Discontinue the use of the term “heritage faculty.”
9. Inculcate a culture of promotion through the full career trajectory.
10. Ensure that there is adequate office space for all departmental staff who must meet with students on what will sometimes necessarily be a confidential basis. This includes graduate student TAs, instructors, lecturers, professors, and student advisors (both academic and non-academic).
11. Future reviews must provide clear guidelines for the production of the Self Study, which should be shared in the department through a clear process that involves all stakeholders in a timely fashion before and during the external reviewers’ site visit.

Diana Brydon, University of Manitoba
Eleanor Ty, Wilfrid Laurier University
Heather Zwicker, University of Alberta