

# UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

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## 1. Review Summary

<b>Program(s) Reviewed:</b>	Philosophy, HBA (Specialist, Major & Minor) Philosophy of Science, HBA (Minor) Ethics and Society, HBA (Minor)
<b>Unit Reviewed:</b>	Department of Philosophy University of Toronto Mississauga
<b>Commissioning Officer:</b>	Vice-Principal Academic & Dean University of Toronto Mississauga
<b>Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):</b>	1. Professor Marguerite Deslauriers Department of Philosophy McGill University  2. Professor Gary Ebbs Department of Philosophy Indiana University, Bloomington
<b>Date of Review Visit:</b>	February 28 - March 1, 2019
<b>Date Presented to AP&amp;P:</b>	May 6, 2020

# Previous UTQAP Review

Date: January 12 and 13, 2012

## Summary of Findings and Recommendations

### 1. Undergraduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- Well-conceived specialist and major programs that contribute to the development of both reasoning and communication skills

The reviewers made the following recommendations:

- Revise the undergraduate curriculum to create more clarity between levels and flexibility by addressing course overlap, the structure of the introductory course, and scheduling conflicts; by aligning the requirements of the specialist with those of other campuses; and by introducing a required fourth year seminar in the major program to create a capstone experience
- Increase the number of small group interactive experiences to create more opportunities for discussion and exchange

### 2. Graduate Programs

- N/A

## Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- High quality of faculty and commitment to students and UTM

## Administration

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- Very high morale among students, staff and faculty

The reviewers made the following recommendations:

- Review the commitment to the Logic major given low enrolment and limited faculty resources

# Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

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## Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of reference; Philosophy Self-study; Previous review report including the administrative response(s); Access to all course descriptions; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty. UTM Degree Level Expectations, 2016; UofT Facts & Figures, 2016; UTM Divisional Academic Plan, 2017; UTM Vision Statement, 2017; UTM Academic Calendar, 2018-2019; UTM Viewbook, 2017-2018; UofT Domestic Viewbook, 2017-2018; Tri-Campus Framework.

## Consultation Process

The reviewers met with the Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean; the Associate Dean, Undergraduate; the Department Chair; Acting Chair of the Graduate Department of Philosophy; Director of Graduate Studies for the Graduate Department of Philosophy; Assistant and Associate Professors; Sessional Instructors & Part-time Lecturers; Current undergraduate and graduate students; and administrative staff.

# Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

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## 1. Undergraduate Program

*Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.*

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
  - Degree programs are sound, teaching is effective, and the morale of teaching staff and students is good
  - Programs are on par with the very best undergraduate programs at top research institutions in the U.S. in terms of coverage of topics, skills taught, quality of instruction, and unique in their offering of the Specialist
  - Department has acted on most of the recommendations made in the previous review, and made notable improvements to their programs and their curriculum delivery
  - Programs contribute substantially to strengthening students' Creativity, Innovation, and Communication (in line with the objectives of UTM's Academic Plan)
- Objectives

- Offers undergraduate degree programs that contribute to [UTM's overall] goals, by teaching students how to reflect honestly and critically on a wide range of topics, including the values of integrity, democracy, and academic freedom
  - Provides students with critical tools to search for new ways of understanding old philosophical problems, and for novel solutions to these problems
  - Learning objectives and degree-level expectations are appropriate
- Admissions requirements
  - Admissions requirements are appropriate
- Curriculum and program delivery
  - The curriculum is designed to provide students with strong foundation in writing and speaking clearly and effectively about difficult philosophical topics - communication skills that can ultimately be applied more broadly
  - Curriculum and program requirements are rigorous and appropriate, reflecting the structure and breadth requirements of other Canadian research universities
  - Specialist and Major programs provide a solid grounding in the history of philosophy as well as logic, metaphysics and epistemology, and social and political philosophy, including (where appropriate) the latest scholarship in these fields
  - Program structure and curriculum, learning outcomes and degree level expectations are all very clear, and are well-communicated to students
  - Enrolment in the Ethics, Law and Society minor has grown impressively in recent years, indicating strong student interest
  - The Department aims (with UTM's Political Science Department) to introduce a new joint major in Politics and Philosophy, which would create a strong link between the two units
  - Valuable year-long experiential learning course for 4<sup>th</sup> year student involves in-depth philosophical research and leading tutorial sections in introductory courses (this also frees up graduate students to TA in more advanced courses)
- Innovation
  - Minors in Philosophy of Science, and in Ethics, Law, and Society are innovative programs tailored to attract students from a wide range disciplines (including both Social Sciences and STEM) who have interests that intersect with Philosophy
- Assessment of learning
  - Courses employ a range of evaluation methods, tailored to the subject matter and the level of the course. These methods all seem appropriate; some are innovative
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - Philosophy Club members clearly feel valued and supported
  - There is a centrally located office designated for the Philosophy Club's use, where students enjoy frequent, informal interactions with faculty
  - Students appreciate events organized by the faculty and also are engaged in organizing events, both to build community, and to serve as means to attract students from other disciplines into Philosophy

- Reviewers were impressed by the students they met with: all were well-prepared and engaged
- Students report great satisfaction with the teaching in the department, and interactions with faculty, lecturers and teaching assistants; they also express great confidence in the undergraduate advisor, as do faculty members
- Orientation and advising are carried out with competence and compassion
- Individual Philosophy faculty and students have undertaken several initiatives to increase student-faculty informal contact, including: a speaker series in which visiting speakers give guest lectures in classes; undergraduate debates and panel discussions on philosophical issues of general interest; meet-and-greet events at the beginning of each term. These initiatives also serve to increase undergraduate interactions with graduate students, and with members of the public
- The department participates in UTM open house events, and is making additional efforts to recruit high-school students to the study of philosophy, spearheaded by the UTM Philosophy Club
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - The New Subject Post Enrolment and Mean Entering Average of New Enrolments for students entering directly out of Ontario high schools shows averages above eighty, and a steady trend of higher averages since 2010
  - The count of completions has been largely steady since 2010
  - The final-year academic achievement of students in Philosophy at UTM has risen slightly since 2010

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - UTM Philosophy NSSE score for Quality of Interactions is low (25.7% compared with 37.6% for U15 Philosophy departments and 37.2% for all U of T disciplines), however reviewers recognize that this measure concerns interactions beyond those between Department students and faculty, and thus seem to be a broader reflection of students' overall experience with other individuals at the University
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - Overall Philosophy enrolments have been steady over the past five years, despite a 45% increase in undergraduate enrolments at UTM
- Student funding
  - Modest student awards are available, but there is no significant funding for undergraduates through the Department (though this is typical of Canadian undergraduate Philosophy programs)

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery

- Following significant increases in enrolment in two deductive logic courses and two inductive logic courses, the Department should work collaboratively to identify ways of expanding the number of seats it offers each semester in areas that have proven attractive to UTM students
- Continue to experiment with new courses, in an effort to discover which courses are most attractive to UTM students
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - Noting that the Department of Philosophy cannot be responsible for all negatively perceived interactions, it should investigate the reasons for the low NSSE score on this measure, in particular carrying out the planned monitoring of teaching quality
  - Institute regular, Department-wide efforts to increase response rate on teaching evaluations, to ensure that results accurately reflect student experience
  - Regularly review comments on course evaluations and identify any trends or themes of student dissatisfaction to address (the Teaching and Learning Collaboration group at UTM may be able to provide data summaries and other resources for this exercise)
  - Increase faculty participation (from a range of different sub-fields) in outreach efforts
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - Develop a strategy for increasing enrolment

## 2. Graduate Program (n/a)

## 3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Research
  - Faculty research is of very high quality, and contributes to a wide range of important topics in contemporary Philosophy and the History of Philosophy
  - Faculty research is published by first-rate philosophy journals and university presses, and members regularly present at refereed conferences
  - Faculty research contributions are highly ranked, both nationally and internationally
  - The scope of areas covered by the faculty is impressively wide, and directly relevant to the teaching mission of the department
  - UTM Philosophy faculty are an essential part of the tri-campus U of T philosophy faculty
  - UTM philosophy faculty have won an impressive number of competitive research grants (19 grants, including 11 SSHRC Insight Grants since 2014)
- Faculty
  - Faculty bring a high-level of professional expertise to their classroom teaching and thesis supervising

- Faculty enrich the education opportunities of both their undergraduate and graduate students by inviting philosophers from other institutions to meet with UTM students, and organizing conferences at U of T to which students are invited
- Faculty have held many prestigious visiting professorships at other leading institutions

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Faculty
  - Challenges related to faculty complement planning (additional faculty or replacement of retiring faculty) in light of low enrolments relative to other UTM departments.
  - Department is top-heavy: there is currently only one tenure-stream assistant professor, who will soon be considered for tenure.

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
  - Develop a comprehensive five-year complement plan that sets priorities on hiring requests, and addresses challenges of stagnant enrolments and possible retirements
  - Prioritize hiring in Asian philosophy
  - Include in complement plan a request and rationale for making at least one hire at the tenure-stream assistant professor level

## 4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
  - Department contributes to Sustainability and Community (objectives highlighted in UTM's Academic Plan)
  - Sessional Instructor and Part-time Lecturers uniformly pleased with the department, and happy to be teaching at UTM
  - Faculty and staff work very effectively to further the teaching mission of the department, and morale across the department (students included) is very high
  - Internal relationships are excellent: faculty express respect and affection for one another, and demonstrate a shared sense of community; students satisfied with courses and expressed respect for the faculty; the work of staff is valued by both students and faculty; teaching staff all spoke warmly of students
  - Department has organized events on important current issues and questions
- Organizational and financial structure

- Department makes good use of its human resources, as is evident in the high quality programs, recent improvements to curriculum, degree requirements, and course design, and the high level of student satisfaction
- Number and organization of department's staff seems adequate for its needs
- The Maanjiwe Nendamowinan building (where the department is housed) is beautiful and comfortable, with ample space for faculty, staff, and students
- Chair does the majority of the work of managing the department, allowing faculty focus on their research and teaching
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
  - Department is healthy and productive
  - Steady and growing interest in philosophy among UTM students: each semester there are waiting lists for many philosophy courses, and rapid rise in enrolments in deductive and inductive logic courses
  - Department is well poised to continue to successfully recruit first-rate new faculty, as positions in philosophy at UTM are currently very attractive
- International comparators
  - U of T tri-campus philosophy faculty ranked 10th overall in the English-speaking world and 1st overall in Canada by the Philosophical Gourmet Report
  - Considered on its own, the UTM philosophy faculty is strong in many central areas of philosophy (such as philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, epistemology, ethics and meta-ethics, ancient philosophy, and 17th-18th century philosophy) and compares favorably with all Canadian philosophy departments, and most U.S. ones of a similar size

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Relationships
  - Co-curricular and extra-curricular events are excellent and integral to department life, but are often organized by faculty independently, without knowledge of what others are organizing for their own classes
- Organizational and financial structure
  - In Winter 2019, 8 faculty members (out of 15 total) were on leave; loss of over half of the faculty in one semester weakens course offerings
  - Lack of nearby, dedicated common space in the Maanjiwe Nendamowinan building where philosophy faculty can congregate, and share ideas with each other and with students
  - Faculty have not reached consensus about the problems the department faces and how best to address them
  - Too much responsibility falls to the Chair, with very few well-established departmental procedures for making collaborative broad-scale strategic decisions (for example, regarding curriculum development and hiring priorities)
  - Goal of increasing faculty-student engagement is commendable but may be constrained by necessarily solitary aspects of philosophical enquiry

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
  - Develop a system for planning, tracking, and advertising co-curricular events, to increase their visibility and avoid duplication of efforts
  - Increase faculty participation in departmental governance
  - Increase faculty efforts to recruit new students and faculty-student engagement where possible
  - Consider an association with the U of T's Centre for South Asian Civilizations
- Organizational and financial structure
  - Develop a fair procedure for prioritizing leave requests, so that no more than 25% of faculty are on leave simultaneously
  - Reviewers recommend UTM provide the department with a common space for faculty and students to gather; consider reconfiguring existing departmental spaces to achieve this
  - Reconsider current departmental management and leadership structure, to encourage collective strategic decision-making
  - Consider appointing a director of undergraduate studies to assist the Chair in course scheduling, oversight of curriculum, organizing co-curricular and extra-curricular events, and leading department-wide strategic discussions
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
  - Use strategic course scheduling and staffing to expand overall enrolment, while also strengthening the curriculum
  - Create an appropriate detailed complement plan, including clear hiring priorities, to strengthen the already excellent faculty

## 2. Administrative Response & Implementation Plan



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
MISSISSAUGA

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

February 25, 2020

Professor Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
Simcoe Hall  
University of Toronto

Dear Professor McCahan:

We are writing to provide an administrative response to the External Review of UTM's Department of Philosophy, which was held in February and March of 2019. This Department includes programs in Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, and Ethics, Law and Society. Overall, the reviewers found that the Department is "healthy and productive" and highlighted very high quality research being produced by the faculty. The reviewers further commented that the programs being offered are sound with effective teaching, specifically commenting on the good morale among teaching staff and students. This is a strong foundation for the Department to build on as they plan for the next five years and beyond.

Below you will find a brief discussion on specific areas raised by the external reviewers followed by an implementation plan identifying action items and timelines. This response was developed in consultation with the Department, through a Town Hall held on November 28, 2019, as well as from a Chair's Administrative Response submitted by Prof. Diana Raffman, Chair of Philosophy. Progress checks and monitoring of the implementation plan will occur through the Chair's Annual Report to the Dean. The next external review of the Department of Philosophy is scheduled for the 2025-2026 academic year, with a midway report submitted to your Office in 2022-2023.

***The reviewers observed that NSSE scores for Quality of Interactions in the department were below the University and U15 averages. They encouraged taking measures to monitor the quality of teaching, including increasing the response rate on course evaluations and regularly reviewing the comments on course evaluations to identify and address any areas of student dissatisfaction.***

The Department of Philosophy has recently implemented a variety of (empirically validated) techniques for increasing response rate, including some suggested by the U of T Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. They are particularly interested in the use of *micro-incentives*, as detailed by their colleague Alex Koo in a primer "Course Evaluation Response Rate Tips". In terms of NSSE scores, given that departmental teaching evaluation scores are at or above the UTM means and medians, we agree with Philosophy that this discrepancy is probably not due to the quality of their teaching *per se* but rather refers to a specific type of interaction that students would like to see

more of – that is co-curricular experiences with faculty outside of the classroom. The Department is currently working with their student association, the “Undergraduate Philosophy Society”, to increase these opportunities. Since the Review, the Club has been very active in promoting student activities with faculty. In addition, the Department is re-purposing the current ‘TA Room’ to also serve as a seminar and meeting room where both students and faculty can congregate, to build a better sense of community.

***The reviewers encouraged developing a system for planning, tracking and advertising co-curricular events to engage as many departmental and community members as possible. They also praised the positive efforts of students in conducting outreach to local high schools, and encouraged faculty to regularly join them and build on these efforts.***

The Department has just hired a part-time Recruitment & Communications Officer who, with some assistance from the Chair’s Assistant, will be responsible for planning, tracking, and producing publicity and recruitment materials for Philosophy’s academic programs and events. Drawing on the successful student outreach to high schools noted above, since July 2019 the Department has run three very successful high school outreach events on the UTM campus with faculty participation. Further events of this nature are already planned. The Dean’s Office has also advised working with the UTM Centre for Student Engagement for involvement in additional outreach and engagement initiatives for current students and alumni.

***The reviewers found that, overall, the department makes good use of its human resources, but could improve in one key respect, namely by developing a fair procedure for prioritizing leave requests to ensure strong course offerings and student access to the courses they need to complete their programs.***

During the period of the Review, more than half of the faculty were, very unusually, on leave or administrative secondments. To avoid this in the future the Department has constructed a shared calendar in which faculty members record their preferred sabbatical terms for the next ten years. Sabbaticals will be scheduled to minimize the number of faculty, especially in a single sub-field, going on leave at the same time. We do not foresee difficulties in this regard for at least the next few years. When conflicts are anticipated, the Chair will form an ad hoc committee of faculty *not* requesting leave during the period in question, to propose possible resolutions based on the details of the particular cases at issue.

***Though the new Maanjiwe Nendamowinan Building meets many of the department's needs, the reviewers noted a lack of dedicated common space close to faculty offices to support informal faculty engagement.***

Philosophy is resolving this issue with the UTM Space Planning and Management Committee and will be repurposing several rooms in the Department, including the TA Room mentioned above. At the Departmental Town Hall, faculty also confirmed that the existing Collaborative Research Space for Humanities on the third floor of the new Maanjiwe Nendamowinan Building is much appreciated and functions well.

***The reviewers encouraged the development of a more comprehensive faculty complement plan that prioritizes a list of potential hires and addresses the current “top-heavy” complement.***

The Department of Philosophy has developed a detailed complement plan, which they have shared with the Dean’s Office. They expect three retirements in the near future in the core topics of Philosophy of Language, Epistemology, Metaphysics and Mind, and propose replacing these with one junior and one senior hire. In addition, they propose hires in new areas such as Political Philosophy, South Asian Philosophy, and Chinese Philosophy. Hire proposals will be evaluated as part of UTM’s annual complement planning exercise. The Department agrees with the Reviewers’ recommendation to focus on junior hires, but is emphatic that at least one senior-level hire is very important to the unit.

***The department’s success with new courses that appeal to students in STEM and other growth disciplines means that there is an opportunity to grow enrolment in the department. The reviewers encouraged expanding the number of seats offered in courses attractive to students and continuing to experiment with new courses.***

The Department agrees entirely with the reviewers in this recommendation and will continue their efforts to make their programs and course offerings as attractive, varied, and edifying as possible. The Department’s current PHL204H5, Philosophy in Everyday Life, which was designed specifically to attract STEM students has expanded from 90 to 140 seats in the last three years. Several more initiatives are already in operation, have been formally proposed, or are being designed. One such example is the introduction of a “Philosophy 1” program (modeled on the program at University of Toronto St George) that assigns senior philosophy students as mentors to junior students. Another example is their Modern Symbolic Logic course (PHL245H5), which has been transformed into a flipped, hybrid format, and has increased its enrolment from an average of about 170 to over 300. Finally, Philosophy is developing a proposal for a minor program in logic, designed to attract students in Math and Computer Science while also appealing to philosophy students interested in formal areas of philosophy.

***The reviewers identified the need for the department to “rethink its management and leadership structure” to support shared responsibility for decision making in areas such as enrolment, curriculum, and complement planning. To that end, they encouraged creating a director/ associate chair of undergraduate studies.***

The Department's first Associate Chair, Undergraduate, has been appointed for the 2019-2020 academic year to oversee curricular and other matters concerning academic programs. The arrangement is working extremely well and we expect it will become a permanent position. Starting in 2020-21, several other departmental functions previously handled by the Chair will be transferred to Departmental committees. These will include the distribution of faculty research funds, awarding of student prizes, and selection of public speakers.

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### **Implementation Plan - Department of Philosophy, UTM**

The Department and the Office of the Dean, in consultation, will undertake the following approaches to enact positive changes:

#### Immediate Term (6 months)

- Development of new and additional co-curricular opportunities with faculty (*unit*)
- Re-purposing of the 'TA room' (*unit with support from the UTM Space Planning and Management Committee*)
- Hiring of Recruitment and Communications Officer (*unit with support from Dean's Office*)
- Development of new high school outreach events (*unit*)
- Setup of sabbatical calendar and conflict resolution process (*unit*)
- Repurposing of several departmental rooms to resolve space concerns (*unit with support from UTM Facilities and Planning*)
- Submission of relevant hire proposals to annual UTM faculty complement planning exercise (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Introduction of Philosophy 1 Program (*unit*)
- Changes and updates to courses to appeal to STEM-focused students (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Addition of new Associate Chair, Undergraduate (*unit and Dean's Office*)

#### Medium Term (1-2 years)

- Continue high school outreach events (*unit*)
- Continue faculty-student co-curricular activities (*unit*)
- Submission of relevant hire proposals to annual UTM faculty complement planning exercise (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Continue implementing changes and updates to courses to appeal to STEM-focused students (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Development and submission for Minor in Logic proposal (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Continuation of Associate Chair, Undergraduate position (*unit and Dean's Office*)

- Establishment of departmental committees (*unit*)

Long Term (3-5 years)

- Submission of relevant hire proposals to annual UTM faculty complement planning exercise (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Implementation of Minor Program in Logic after governance approval (*unit and Dean's Office*)
- Continued establishment of additional departmental committees, as needed (*unit*)

Please let me know if you have any questions about this response.

Sincerely,



Amrita Danieri  
Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean



Heather M.-L. Miller  
Vice-Dean, Teaching & Learning

AD/hm

Enc: Chair's Response to the 2019 External Review of the Department of Philosophy, UTM

CC: Diana Raffman, Chair of Philosophy

### **3. Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings**

The spokesperson for the Reading Group reported that the summary covered the full Review. The Group agreed that the Dean's administrative response fully addressed the issues identified. The Group did raise one question about progress that had been made with respect to a joint major with the Department of Political Science.

Professor Diana Raffman, Chair of Department of Philosophy, noted that, while there was tremendous potential for the joint major, department priorities had shifted and the joint program was not being explored at present.

No follow-up report was requested.

### **4. Institutional Executive Summary**

The reviewers found the Department of Philosophy to be healthy and productive, with good morale among teaching staff and students; they praised the well-prepared and engaged students, who benefit from the department's rigorous degree programs; they were impressed with the faculty's effective teaching and high-quality research, noting strengths in many central areas of philosophy; and found that the department compares favourably with all Canadian philosophy departments and most U.S. philosophy departments of similar size. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: taking measures to monitor the quality of teaching, including increasing the response rate on course evaluations and regularly reviewing the comments on course evaluations; developing a system for planning, tracking and advertising co-curricular events; increasing faculty efforts in conducting outreach to local high schools; developing a fair procedure for prioritizing leave requests; addressing a lack of dedicated common space close to faculty offices; developing a more comprehensive faculty complement plan; exploring opportunities to grow enrolment in the department; "[rethinking the department's] management and leadership structure" to support shared responsibility for decision making, and creating a director/ associate chair of undergraduate studies.

### **5. Monitoring and Date of Next Review**

Progress checks and monitoring of the implementation plan will occur through the Chair's Annual Report to the Dean.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs no later than 2022-23 on the status of the implementation plans.

The next review will be commissioned in 2025-26 for a site visit to take place no later than eight years from February 2019.

## **6. Distribution**

On October 26, 2020, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Dean of the University of Toronto Mississauga, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to the Chair of the Department.