

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1. Review Summary

Programs Reviewed:	Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations - Ancient, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations - General, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations - Medieval, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations - Modern, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, BA (Hons): Minor Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, MA Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, PhD
Unit Reviewed:	Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
Commissioning Officer:	Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professor James P. Allen, Department of Egyptology and Assyriology, Brown University 2. Professor Paul M. Cobb, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania 3. Professor Gottfried Hagen, Department of Middle East Studies, University of Michigan
Date of Review Visit:	December 3-4, 2020
Date Reported to AP&P:	October 26, 2021

Previous UTQAP Review

Date: February 16-17, 2012

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Rich opportunities for learning outside the classroom

2. Graduate Programs

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Improving clarity and consistency around graduate comprehensive examinations
- Looking at times to completion which exceed University of Toronto norms but are lower than disciplinary norms

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Scope of faculty interests and teaching; vigorous faculty scholarship

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Evaluating the capacity of existing faculty to meet the demands of all facets of the program; developing a plan to increase faculty complement

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- High quality program in Department identified as “one of the premier units of its kind in the world today”
- Alert and engaged undergraduate and graduate students
- High morale; harmonious environment

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Addressing the quality of physical space to protect the archeological collections in the Department’s care

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of reference; Self-study; Previous review report including the administrative response; Access to all course descriptions; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty.

Consultation Process

Dean, Acting Vice-Dean Academic Planning, Associate Dean Unit-Level Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science; Department Chair, Associate Chairs Undergraduate and Graduate; Department Faculty; Sessional Lecturers and CLTAs; Undergraduate and Graduate students; Administrative staff; Chairs of relevant cognate units: Anthropology, Comparative Literature, Study of Religion, History, & Art History

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program(s)

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

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Program's structure, curriculum, length, learning outcomes and degree expectations are entirely appropriate and on par with other peer institutions
- Objectives
 - ▶ NMC's objectives in teaching and research are consistent with the University and Faculty's core mission
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Admission requirements for all programs appear to be entirely appropriate
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Curriculum is of high quality and appropriately structured at all levels
 - ▶ Significant curriculum mapping efforts and defined learning outcomes are evident
 - ▶ Highly successful recent initiative to better integrate quantitative methods into curriculum (particularly in archaeological fields)
 - ▶ University appears supportive of department's efforts to provide more continuity and higher pedagogical quality in language instruction, by having more language courses taught by language-teaching specialists, rather than graduate students and tenure-stream faculty
- Innovation
 - ▶ Reviewers commend NMC's active approach to generate integrative upper-year research projects for undergraduates
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Evaluation of student achievement at all levels, while conventional, seems appropriate and effective
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Undergraduate students express high satisfaction with quality of instruction
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
 - ▶ Quality of applicant/admitted students is entirely appropriate and consistent

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

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Curriculum is fairly traditional, tailored towards meeting needs of students with expressed prior interest in the field, rather than seeking to attract new students from other disciplines
 - ▶ The two undergraduates interviewed have interests primarily in the modern and contemporary Middle East, and feel that these interests are not being met
 - ▶ Reviewers surprised by light attention paid to language instruction in the self-study and site visit, despite consensus that strength in this field is core to department's mission
 - ▶ Scheduling of upper-level language courses creates conflicts with other courses, preventing many students from advancing as much as they would like
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Considerable discrepancy in real-world opportunities available (or advertised) to undergraduate students in the various subfields
 - ▶ NMC does not offer career counseling
 - ▶ Students critical of availability and flexibility of faculty, and lack of flexibility in the time schedule

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Students and faculty reported a need for greater transparency and flexibility in the course planning process
 - ▶ Programs would benefit from courses that guide students to more than one of the five core areas, with a thematic or comparative perspective
 - ▶ Faculty encouraged to consider additional ways to present courses to students, that that expand the breadth of coverage of issues facing contemporary societies
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Enhance opportunities for students (particularly of modern Middle East) to find local research opportunities, internships, work-study, and study abroad

2. Graduate Program(s)

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

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ NMC's breadth of faculty makes its graduate program one with enviable potential and a producer of a new generation of leaders in their academic fields
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Admission requirements appear entirely appropriate

- ▶ NMC considers the MA largely as a ‘feeder program’ for the PhD level; most students admitted to doctoral program already have an MA; this is very appropriate given concerns about doctoral time to completion
- ▶ Unique position of NMC in Canada assures it can pick very best domestic applicants
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Graduate curriculum offered is comprehensive and rigorous
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Commendable departmental efforts to establish a robust mentoring program for PhD students

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

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Matters of funding, professionalization, and departmental culture currently prevent the graduate program from realizing its great potential
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Limitations on international graduate students result in NMC having to regularly turn away outstanding candidates
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Reviewers heard contradictory messages regarding accessibility of methods courses in related departments for NMC graduate students
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Satisfaction with the graduate program appears rather mixed, with some students voicing frustrations over faculty responsiveness and engagement
 - ▶ Students frustrated by lack of guidance towards professionalization, building portfolios through conference attendance, organizing workshops, and publication
 - ▶ Students and faculty find current system of TA assignments opaque, and many students end up with very little or no teaching experience by graduation
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Increasing PhD time to completion rates highlighted as significant concern, though reviewers note that this may be a function of the academic labor market, which does not create incentives to graduate in a timely manner
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ NMC did not present any data on post-degree employment
- Student funding
 - ▶ Graduate funding for conferences is very limited

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Ensure that graduate students do not feel locked out of courses in cognate units that are relevant for their training

- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Consider ways to better prepare students for changing conditions, by including training for non-academic employment from the start
 - ▶ Ensure students are rotated through several courses as TAs, and that all students have opportunity to teach sections, even if not in their specialization
 - ▶ Reviewers encourage NMC to work with FAS to find a way to let qualified graduate students teach their own courses
 - ▶ Allow graduate students a voice in assignment of their primary advisor; make explicitly clear that requests for a change from either side are always possible
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Allow more flexibility regarding requirements, specifically the languages of scholarship, with an eye toward lowering time to completion
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ Reviewers feel strongly that unit should be tracking post-degree employment data if they are not doing so already
- Student funding
 - ▶ Increasing student stipends to compete with US institutions would lower NMC’s rate of rejections

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Research activity and output of NMC is outstanding, and compares very well with any peer institution, making NMC a highly visible institution, and desirable partner for collaborations
 - ▶ Many NMC faculty members are leaders in their respective fields
- Research
 - ▶ Faculty members’ books appear in prestigious series, they publish in leading international, peer-reviewed journals and serve on the boards of important journals, book series, and professional institutions
 - ▶ Although political developments in the Middle East have negatively impacted fieldwork conditions, including archaeological projects, NMC retains significant activity at several sites, with an international profile
 - ▶ NMC fortunate to have own archaeology lab, “an excellent and worthwhile institution”
- Faculty
 - ▶ Junior faculty in both tenure-stream and CLTA positions are poised to maintain excellent departmental profile
 - ▶ Pre-tenure faculty members feel welcome, supported, and protected from heavy service assignments; they note that tenure requirements have been clearly articulated and that they have been given the necessary resources to meet them
 - ▶ Commendable authorization of CLTAs for language instruction in Turkish and Arabic (though reviewers note this should be considered a temporary solution)

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

- Faculty
 - ▶ Pre-tenure faculty feel that NMC could do more to introduce them to the workings of the university, and related opportunities
 - ▶ CLTAs note concerns around contingency, fragility of positions, and a perceived lack of clarity regarding how CLTA positions might become tenure-stream

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ Use an upcoming staff review to explore ways to provide additional support to junior faculty members; a department-specific orientation could be of benefit
 - ▶ NMC encouraged to clearly and realistically articulate what steps, if any, are needed for a CLTA position to be converted to tenure-stream
 - ▶ NMC urged to rely on CLTAs primarily as a suppletive measure—for example, as substitute instructors for Chair or faculty members on sabbatical

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ As a multi-disciplinary area studies unit, NMC is well positioned to interact with a number of departments, such as Anthropology, History, and Comparative Literature; relationships are described as mostly productive and collegial
 - ▶ Partnership with ROM is a major advantage for the training of future archaeologists at undergraduate and graduate levels
 - ▶ NMC heavily invested in outreach, especially to Middle Eastern communities in Canada, and has enjoyed remarkable success in raising funds, most prominently for Persian Studies and for Ethiopian
 - ▶ Archaeology lab conducts regular outreach to local schools
 - ▶ Current chair's leadership highly praised at all levels
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Dedicated, high-quality staff
 - ▶ Department's financial health appears robust
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Department has well-deserved positive reputation for the wide breadth of its faculty, resources, and collaborative spirit
 - ▶ Range of language offerings is "truly impressive"
 - ▶ In every aspect, NMC is an intellectually exciting collective of faculty, staff, and students, which continues to make valuable contributions to its various fields
 - ▶ University should be commended for supporting and investing in NMC as evident from last review cycle, resulting in faculty expansion and move to a new facility

- ▶ Department leadership and faculty express great hopes for new location, noting its proximity to ROM and to upgraded lab space
- International comparators
 - ▶ One of the strongest departments of its kind in North America and the strongest in Canada
 - ▶ Unique in breadth of expertise and curriculum; showing every indication of moving from current position of excellence to one of true eminence
 - ▶ “There may not be another program on the continent that teaches Ethiopian, Syriac, Coptic, Ottoman Turkish, and Pahlavi on a regular basis in addition to the standard offerings of ancient and modern languages”

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

- Relationships
 - ▶ Both undergraduate and graduate students report feeling largely removed from the life of the department, except as consumers of course content
 - ▶ Graduate students note lack of cohesion and community among themselves, and with the department as a whole
 - ▶ Students at all levels feel the need for an appropriate mechanism whereby their concerns can be conveyed to faculty and administration, and to conduct relevant work in the areas in which they are training
 - ▶ Faculty note that allocation of resources based on student numbers sets up competition between departments where cooperation would be more fruitful
 - ▶ Faculty note that cognate departments have not been forthcoming in cross-listing courses; however reviewers also flag that some NMC courses have also been open in the past only to students within the department
 - ▶ Reviewers note that while commendable, outreach activities seem largely left to the entrepreneurial spirit of individual faculty members, and not institutionalized
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Department often operates more like a cluster of smaller departments, circumscribed by its five core areas
 - ▶ Concerns raised that administrative boundaries (between departments, campuses, and stakeholder groups) prevent both individuals and the department from developing to their full potential
 - ▶ Undergraduate program does not currently have the same level of staff support as the graduate program (ie. a full-time administrative position)
 - ▶ Insufficient workspace for all graduate students to have their own desks
 - ▶ Current leadership structure seems to put a disproportionate amount of responsibility solely on the Chair; all staff report directly to the Chair, without an administrative supervisor
 - ▶ Premium put on higher enrolment appears to undermine opportunities to create personalized learning experiences in small classes

- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Department faces challenges around cohesion, confronted with demand for wide disciplinary collaboration, while maintaining a deep area focus
 - ▶ With regard to complement planning, the desire to maintain NMC's remarkable breadth is seen as working against creating new disciplinary perspectives
 - ▶ Several faculty members expressed concern that their core areas would drop below critical mass due to possible upcoming retirements
 - ▶ Sumerian and Hittite are notable absences in otherwise extremely impressive array of language offerings
 - ▶ Instruction in Arabic limited to Modern Standard Arabic – no opportunity for non-native/heritage speakers to acquire colloquial variants
 - ▶ Location of Hebrew instruction noted as “somewhat contentious”, with modern Hebrew taught in the Department for the Study of Religion

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Reviewers note significant potential benefits of enhanced academic and social integration; and urge leadership, faculty, and graduate students to engage in an open and sustained conversation to work towards a resolution
 - ▶ Reviewers encourage increased engagement of graduate students in the ancient fields with the modern Middle East, noting opportunity for development of intellectual community
 - ▶ Outreach work to the Toronto community may be helpful in identifying enhanced learning opportunities beyond the classroom
 - ▶ Prioritize opportunities for students when making decisions about course availability; cooperate with other departments in cross-listing and opening courses, both to NMC majors and those from other departments
 - ▶ Administration urged to enhance communication with cognate units, to ensure that increased openness in course cross-listing does not disadvantage NMC in terms of resource allocation
 - ▶ Include graduate students in the self-representation on the departmental website
 - ▶ Faculty urged to be more available and flexible to student needs than they are currently; develop explicit, department-wide agreement on best practices
 - ▶ Department encouraged to use overlaps and synergies between its various parts as sources of new knowledge and growth; “it is high time for faculty and students to be thinking as much as possible as members of one department rather than an assemblage of programs” through a sustained effort to engage all stakeholders
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Additional or enhanced staff positions would benefit the department
 - ▶ Administration of undergraduate program may require a full-time staff person, who might also provide more support for faculty in curriculum planning, to help address student concerns, and provide support for students seeking extracurricular learning opportunities

- ▶ Strengthen role of graduate administrator to serve as liaison between students and faculty/administration
- ▶ Consider creation of office manager position, who can relieve Chair of some administrative responsibilities and more equitably distribute tasks to staff
- ▶ Form standing Executive Committee of faculty representing all five program tracks to assist and consult with Chair in departmental business
- ▶ Provide workspace for all graduate students
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ NMC encouraged to think strategically and creatively about a reconfiguration for a modern faculty position, taking advantage of opportunities to bring in new disciplines such as anthropology, comparative literature, urban studies, environmental history
 - ▶ Expanding to bring data science and digital humanities into NMC via any new faculty position “makes eminent sense”
 - ▶ NMC encouraged to engage in broad departmental discussion about long-term curricular planning, responsive to innovative research and non-conventional student interests
 - ▶ Restructure and re-envision the curriculum to better engage with contemporary concerns
 - ▶ Department encouraged to support language instructors within and outside unit to establish forum to share experiences and professionalize language instruction
 - ▶ Housing all Hebrew instruction in NMC could make good sense intellectually and academically, “reflecting the original context of the language in the region.”
 - ▶ Include instruction in colloquial dialects in the Arabic-language curriculum
 - ▶ Unit and the University urged to partner to identify external sources of funding to support graduate study
 - ▶ Greater coordination between University Advancement and NMC’s entrepreneurial initiatives with local diasporic communities may prove fruitful

2. Administrative Response & Implementation Plan 11



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

September 14, 2021

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

Re: UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations

Dear Professor McCahan,

Along with the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, I am pleased with the external reviewers' assessment of the Department and its undergraduate and graduate programs: Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations – Ancient, H.B.A. (Specialist, Major); Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations – General, H.B.A. (Specialist, Major); Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations – Medieval, H.B.A. (Specialist, Major); Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations – Modern, H.B.A. (Specialist, Major); Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations (Minor); Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations (M.A., Ph.D). The reviewers acknowledged the Department as “one of the strongest departments of its kind in North America and the strongest in Canada, with a well-deserved positive reputation for the wide breadth of its faculty, resources, and collaborative spirit.”

The quality of these programs notwithstanding, as per your letter dated May 25, 2021, the review report raises a number of issues and challenges. I am writing to address the areas of the review report that you identify as key. The responses to these items and implementation plan are separated into immediate- (six months), medium- (one to two years), and longer- (three to five years) term, along with who will take the lead in each area. Where appropriate, I have identified any necessary changes in organization, policy, or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them. The Dean's office has discussed the reviewers' comments through consultation with the Chair of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and to develop the following implementation plan incorporating the reviewers' recommendations.

Implementation Plan

The reviewers made several observations and recommendations regarding the undergraduate programs:

- *The reviewers encouraged the Department to reconsider the balance of undergraduate course offerings, to engage students with a wider range of disciplinary backgrounds or*

interests

- *They recommended expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in research and other outside-the-classroom experiences.*

Immediate-term response: The Department is committed to continuing to evolve its diverse course offerings (which range across disciplinary perspectives, time periods, methodologies and geographies). The expertise of recently appointed faculty members will allow NMC's Undergraduate Affairs Committee to pursue the development of new offerings in Data Science and Archeology, Middle Eastern and Islamic Law, and Geography and the Environment, for example.

Expanding experiential opportunities for undergraduate students is one of the strategic initiatives in the 2020-25 Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Plan. To expand opportunities, we established the Experiential Learning & Outreach Support (ELOS) office, which provides administrative, pedagogical and partnership development support for experiential learning activities, including industry and community-engaged projects, field experiences, academic internships, paid work placements, and research and international opportunities. We have also recently appointed a Faculty Advisor on experiential learning. The EL Faculty Advisor is working closely with ELOS to provide strategic guidance and support to academic units interested in expanding or launching experiential learning programming.

Medium-term response: The Department will review the structure of its first-year offerings, in particular, and carefully consider the Reviewers' recommendation to consolidate their multiple first-year offerings into a single gateway course with coverage across the five core areas. A single course with sweeping breadth may engage students with a wider range of disciplinary backgrounds, as the reviewers suggest.

NMC is an historically strong advocate and partner in the Faculty's drive to promote experiential learning and welcomes the opportunity to work with the ELOS Director to expand its experiential opportunities (which under the current COVID conditions may take a few years to realize).

The reviewers observed that "many graduate students end up with very little or no teaching experience by the time they graduate."

Immediate-term response: The decline in undergraduate student enrolment, coupled with a gradual increase in the overall size of the graduate (PhD) program, has made it especially challenging to provide teaching opportunities to PhD students. To address the issue, NMC has begun assigning TA-ships to all incoming first-year PhD students, which will ensure that they complete their degree with more teaching experience. NMC's involvement in enhanced TA opportunities, such as the Writing-Integrated Teaching (WIT) and Quantitative Reasoning in the Humanities (QR) programs, also contributes to students' exposure to teaching pedagogy.

Medium-term response: Over the course of 2021-22, the Dean's Office will undertake a substantial review of department-specific admission targets for domestic graduate students. As

this process will likely lead to a new allocation algorithm, it may yield better alignment between undergraduate and graduate enrolment within departments.

The Faculty continues to offer a “Pathways for PhDs” workshop series, focusing on career exploration and skill translation for graduates beyond the academy. The Coordinator, Graduate Student Professional Development, will work with NMC to explore unit-specific resources and strategies to address this gap.

The reviewers noted increasing PhD time-to-completion rates as a cause for concern, and commented that more flexibility regarding requirements, specifically the languages of scholarship, may help to address the issue.

Immediate-term response: Time-To-Completion (TTC) for NMC is a concern for the Faculty. The Dean’s Office offers unit-specific support for TTC through its Milestones and Pathways program. The Milestones arm of the program offers activities to help graduate students stay on track and achieve their milestones. Unit-based graduate writing support, for instance, is one component of that program. Our Director of Graduate Writing Support holds workshops and writing groups to help students with grant applications and dissertation writing (for instance).

Arts & Science has made a recent change in graduate funding designed to encourage students to apply for external awards and reduce their time to completion. As of 2021-22, we now require Departments to pass on all award incentives (e.g., top ups and TA relief) to domestic holders of major awards. TA relief directly rewards them with more time for their research.

NMC encourages faculty to include funding for their students in their research grant budgets and ensures that funding ‘top ups’ are passed directly to students in their funding packages. In addition, the Department has taken a more proactive role ensuring that faculty meet regularly with their student advisees, requiring signed progress reports, and it has facilitated the convening of more graduate seminars for students to present their research and receive constructive feedback.

Regarding language requirements, a critical facet of doctoral training in NMC, the Department will continue to consider more effective ways of assisting students in achieving this important program requirement.

The reviewers flagged faculty concerns regarding obstacles to inter-departmental cooperation, and recommended increased cross-listing of courses between NMC and cognate units.

Immediate-to-Medium term response: NMC will work to ensure that there is regular, clear, and active communication between the department chairs, particularly regarding undergraduate courses, which will better ensure that all are aware of cross-listing opportunities.

In their comments regarding faculty complement planning, the reviewers encouraged NMC to “think strategically and creatively” about expanding into new disciplinary areas, while also acknowledging the value of comprehensive coverage in existing core areas.

Immediate-term response: NMC is committed to developing and pursuing interdisciplinary and computational research opportunities (e.g., the Digital Humanities), while continuing to bolster research and training in the cultures, histories, languages and literatures of the Near and Middle East.

Medium-term response: The Faculty instituted a new layer of Unit-Level Academic Planning this past year, in which Departments engage in a consultative process to produce an academic plan in the year following the completion of the UTQAP review process and discuss that plan with senior academic and administrative leadership in the Dean’s office. The unit-level academic plan is a forward-looking document that both articulates a department’s planned future directions over the following five years and also highlights progress made on the implementation plan identified in the UTQAP administrative response. Complement planning is a central component of the plan.

The reviewers suggested that faculty members felt there was confusion around complement planning and the basis on which decisions were made to hire faculty to non-continuing CLTA appointments, or to tenure stream positions. This included a sense of lack of transparency around the potential for faculty in CLTA positions to compete competitively for tenure stream positions.

Immediate-term response: Departmental hiring priorities do not necessarily translate into tenure-stream positions because new tenure-stream positions are allocated at the Faculty level. All requests for new positions across the Faculty are submitted to the Faculty Appointments Committee (FAC), which includes representation across its sectors (Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences) and from the Colleges. The FAC reviews all requests for new positions and makes recommendations to the Dean regarding which requests should be granted. In a given year, there are many more requests than available positions. In cases where a department’s request is not granted, they can request permission to hire a non-continuing CLTA. Hence, tenure-stream aspirations sometimes result in CLTA positions. As mentioned above, the Unit-Level Academic Planning process will include faculty complement planning as a key feature and will facilitate clear articulation of the Department’s complement plan over the five years of the plan.

The reviewers highlighted departmental cohesion as a significant issue, and noted several barriers to integration among the department’s various stakeholders. They also report that students at both levels commented on feeling “removed from the life of the department.”

Immediate-term response: NMC’s exceptional interdisciplinary range and diversity is both its greatest strength and presents its most significant challenge. Seminars, lecture series, and social events that attempt to transcend the Department’s disciplinary ‘silos’ have met with some success and will continue to be supported with Department resources. Such community-building

activities and events will also help to address student concerns about their lack of involvement in the intellectual life of the Department. Curriculum, such as a common core ‘gateway’ course (see above), that better integrates NMC’s diverse range of disciplinary fields and programs is critical and will be a priority of the Department’s curriculum planning efforts. Faculty appointments that are truly interdisciplinary (as specified above) will also bring greater cohesion over time.

The reviewers noted that the department’s leadership structure places a considerable amount of responsibility solely on the Chair, and identified other areas in which additional administrative support would benefit the department.

Immediate-term response: The Faculty, through its Administrative Human Resources Office, is working with the Department to conduct a complete review of its administrative staff requirements.

The Dean’s office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S Unit-Level Academic Planning process. A brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the December 3-4, 2020 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared.

The year of the next review will be no later than the 2027-28 review cycle.

To conclude, we appreciate that the external reviewers identified the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations’ strengths and noted a few areas for development. The Department has already begun to move forward with plans to address the recommendations as presented by the reviewers.

Sincerely,



Melanie Woodin
Dean and Professor of Cell and Systems Biology

cc.

Timothy Harrison, Chair, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, Faculty of Arts & Science

Gillian Hamilton, Acting Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science

Daniella Mallinck, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

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

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the summary accurately covered the full review. The group agreed the administrative responses addressed each concern for both the immediate and longer term.

In response to a question, Professor Timothy Harrison, Chair, Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, commented that:

- Because it was not included in the standardized data sets originally provided to the Department, placement data was not included in the review. He assured the Committee that the data will be included in future reviews.

No follow-up report was requested.

4. Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers praised the department as “unquestionably the best of its kind in Canada, and in some ways the best in North America”; they commended the University’s support of the Department in response to the last review, through faculty expansion and an upcoming move to a new facility; the high-quality curriculum with extensively mapped course learning outcomes; the “truly impressive” range of language offerings; the outstanding research activity and output; they note that pre-tenure faculty report feeling welcome and supported, with tenure requirements clearly articulated; departmental staff are strong and dedicated; and finally, the reviewers highlighted NMC’s significant investment in outreach and success at raising funds, most prominently for Persian and Ethiopian studies. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: reconsidering the balance of undergraduate course offerings, to engage students with a wider range of disciplinary backgrounds or interests; expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in research and other outside-the-classroom experiences; enhancing graduate student teaching opportunities; addressing increasing PhD time-to-completion rates with more flexible requirements; increasing cross-listing of courses between NMC and cognate units; thinking strategically about expanding into new disciplinary areas; addressing faculty confusion and a perceived lack of transparency around complement planning; enhancing departmental cohesion and integration; and considering additional administrative support to reduce the burden on the Chair and generally benefit the department. The Dean’s Administrative Response describes the Faculty, unit and programs’ responses to the reviewers’ recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

5. Monitoring and Date of Next Review

The Dean’s office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S Unit-Level Academic Planning process. A brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the December 3-4, 2020 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared.

The year of the next review will be no later than the 2027-28 review cycle.

6. Distribution

On January 15, 2022, 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 Faculty of Arts and Science, 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.