

Office of the Provost & Vice President Academic  
Nipissing University  
100 College Drive, Box 5002



## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

PROGRAM	SENATE APPROVAL DATE	PREPARED BY
English	September 18, 2020	Arja Vainio-Mattila, PhD.

### A. SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS & LISTING OF PROGRAMS UNDER REVIEW

SELF-STUDY REVIEW TIMELINE	DATE
1. Self-Study Presented to AQAPC	October 10, 2019
2. Site Visit Conducted	March 12 – 13, 2020
3. Reviewer's Report Received	April 14, 2020
4. Internal Review Committee Response Received	April 30, 2020
5. Dean's Response Received	July 9, 2020

#### The members of the review committee were:

- Dr. Gillian McCann (Internal)
- Dr. Jennifer Blair, University of Ottawa (External)
- Dr. Neil Brooks, Huron University College (External)

#### The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

- Bachelor of Arts Honours Specialization
- Bachelor of Arts Specialization
- Bachelor of Arts Major

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on October 19, 2018 and re-ratified by the Quality Council on April 26, 2019.

### B. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

*External Reviewers: Faculty members take to heart the University's mission to enable students' access to postsecondary education (particularly students from northern Ontario, Indigenous students, and students who are mature and/or who have transferred from other post-secondary institutions). On several occasions during our visit faculty members spoke about their aims to meet their students generously and precisely where they are upon arrival at Nipissing (in terms of skill sets and overall intellectual goals), and to take them to significantly higher levels of reading, writing, cultural knowledge, and critical thinking skills. We heard very committed appeals to the importance of actually teaching students*

*these key, but sometimes abstract-seeming, skills, and of recognizing that this pedagogical endeavour goes beyond simply filling students with information or exposing them to new literary and cultural works. This non-elitist dedication to learning no doubt enhances the overall student experience, and we suspect that English Studies goes above and beyond the call of duty in terms of meeting the Nipissing “student experience” goals in this respect.*

### C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

**External Reviewers Recommendation #1:** *Either through cross appointment with one of the currently advertised positions or through a new appointment, the Department of English Studies must find a way to offer more courses in First Nations’ literatures to align with Nipissing University’s commitment to indigenization. This would seem essential to Nipissing fulfilling its Academic Plan. Such courses will better prepare Education students for the recent shift in the Ontario High School English curriculum, which has inspired many Ontario school boards to make grade 11 English an entirely Indigenous Literatures course.*

**Unit Response:** The department strongly agrees with this recommendation. As the reviewers’ report recognizes (2.8), English studies has done work to fulfil this mandate. For many years, we have supported the then-Native Studies program with special courses in Native (now Indigenous) literature, and more recently, many of us have made changes in our individual course syllabi, adding texts by indigenous writers, and topics related to Indigenous history and culture, and we have invited Elders or Indigenous Studies colleagues to be guest speakers in our classrooms. We recognize that much more can be done. However, we note that the most innovative and topical course offered on this theme in English Studies this year, ENGL3036 Indigeneity and Media in Canada, was developed and taught by a contract faculty member. Until we have a full-time time position for an Indigenous scholar, measures to “decolonize” English Studies will be incomplete. The full-time faculty member’s current research trajectory should be focused on Indigenous culture and/or literature in order to help Nipissing enrich its English Studies program and to establish an intellectual exchange between Western scholarship and Indigenous knowledge. In our view, hiring a faculty member with strong ties to local Indigenous communities should be seen as an asset because this faculty member could facilitate a richer dialogue between Indigenous intellectuals, artists, and activists and the university community as a whole. This is the most direct and comprehensive way to change content and pedagogy from one that is primarily colonial to one that invites multiple ways of knowing. The full-time faculty member would continue to seek out ways to open existing courses to new texts and approaches with resources developed by the university, through the Dean of Teaching and Learning, the Chair in Indigenous Education, and the Arts and Science Indigenization/decolonization subcommittee.

**Dean’s Response:** I agree with this recommendation. A potential cross-appointment is being considered thanks to the Cluster Hire search (initiated in the fall 2019 and completed in June 2020, respectively), as well as through the continued Arts and Science effort to integrate indigenous ways of knowing into Arts and Science programs and their curricula.

The English Studies Department has made many contributions to this area. Some of the English Studies (ES) faculty have contributed greatly to the First Year Foundations program that has a strong, indigenous ways of knowing and methodology component. The ES faculty members also participated in the ad hoc Arts and Science committee on indigenizing and decolonizing Arts and Science curricula. I am confident that the department will continue expanding their collaborations with the Indigenous Studies program, indigenous communities and scholars.

**Provost’s Response:** Nipissing has recently completed the hiring of a tenure track faculty member in Indigenous Studies with qualifications to be cross-appointed with English Studies. I would encourage the Dean to explore the cross-appointment opportunity with the Faculty member and the two units in question.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #2:** *The Department of English Studies has had significant faculty contributions to non-departmental roles (institutional administration, faculty association, external bodies).*

*Should this pattern continue, the department must be vigilant in protecting the range of course offerings to students through proper replacement of courses lost. The administration must also support the department in this respect, as is standard at universities across Ontario—i.e. when English faculty members are seconded to such external roles, their teaching duties are fulfilled by teaching staff hired in place of the seconded professor (someone who can reasonably teach their courses). This is the only way that program integrity can be maintained in such situations.*

**Unit Response:** We heartily agree with the importance of planning to replace courses lost to faculty service, especially after our experience last year when a complicated situation involving our giving up nine credits from our program to serve the FYFE initiative and a sixth ACAD position that was cut from the budget at the last minute resulted in the Chair eventually taking on overload in order to protect the pedagogical integrity of our ACAD courses.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. Over the past seven years, the department members served in various administrative roles and their teaching loads were not offset with a replacement hire. Since the ES department is one of the larger departments at Nipissing University, a more permanent replacement has been difficult to justify due to budgetary constraints.

**Provost's Response:** This kind of support is part of the annual planning of workload and will be informed by enrolment, the role of the course in a programme, its service functions, and budget realities.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #3:** *The \$2000 budget line for "Other supplies" which has been reduced to \$500 should be restored. Student socials, speakers, support of student academic and creative initiatives are all essential aspects of a thriving English Studies department and are part of the enhanced student experience essential to Nipissing's recruiting strategy and self-definition. Departments require this sort of commitment and support so that academics remain connected with the broader institutional initiatives of maintaining best "student experience." In our interview with students, the students collectively indicated a desire for more departmental events.*

**Unit Response:** Unsurprisingly, we agree with this recommendation. Following this recommendation would cost the university \$1500 a year.

**Dean's Response:** Student events and speaker series are sponsored through the Dean's budget

**Provost's Response:** This support exists at the Decanal level.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #4:** *If the institution's push towards increasing the international student cohort is successful, then consideration must be given to enhancing offerings in English as a Second Language courses and continuing support for the ACAD courses as well as the First Year Foundations Experience. These courses and initiatives could be effectively housed in the English Studies Department.*

**Unit Response:** While we certainly agree with the recommendation that any increase in international student enrolment must be accompanied by an increase in academic resources for these students, we need to point out that the only person with expertise in ESL or English for Academic Purposes in the department is currently employed on part-time contracts only. If there is to be an expansion of English courses for International students, this person should be employed on a full-time contract that would allow her to develop these courses; for example, offering an experiential one- or two-credit English course for all international students who usually arrive early in August. ACAD is not designed for speakers of English as a second language and cannot just be "re-jigged" so that some sections teach a different set of skills from other sections. We disagree with the suggestion that English Studies could in any way house the First Year Foundations Experience courses because those courses are not English courses or even Humanities courses.

**Dean's Response:** While ACAD courses have been historically housed in the English Studies Department, the department has been encouraged to have further discussions with other departments and disciplines about academic

writing approaches and methodologies across disciplines. In terms of the First Year Foundations program, this program is not limited to, or exclusive to, the English Studies program. It has been designed as a comprehensive, alternative track for first-year students whose GPA is under 70%, but also for those who remain undecided about their area of interest. The goal is to continue its programming after the MCU funding has finished through a collaborative, cross-disciplinary First Year Foundations committee that will consist of faculty from Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences.

**Provost's Response:** As the internationalization strategy is developed for the Institution, resources will be allocated to support that strategy. At this point there is no plan to increase ESL courses at Nipissing, but rather to direct students to external language schools prior to coming to Nipissing.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #5:** *The department should collectively consider the potential to offer more summer courses successfully. Thus far courses offered in the summer have had to be cancelled because of low enrolments. The reason these courses are undersubscribed is that students often move away from North Bay in the summer. Still, the fact remains that many English Studies students would benefit from being able to make up a dropped or failed class, or from getting ahead during the summer term. The department should brainstorm possibilities for making these courses more desirable (and possible) for students—whether this means offering more summer online courses, individual directed reading or collective “book club” reading courses, project-based courses, or community service learning courses.*

**Unit Response:** We have been offering 3 to 6 credits of online courses in the summer in recent years, but will certainly brainstorm these options. As far as workload is concerned, a few of us would be happy with a 2-2-1 load but the others would rather keep either fall or winter free for research so would be prepared to offer a 0-3-2 load or a 3-0-2 load. The problem with those loads, however, is that service obligations continue in the fall and winter semesters and cannot easily be transferred to a summer teaching semester. Any departmental commitment to put on more summer courses will have to take these workload issues into account.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. Increasingly, enrolments in the spring/summer term are generated through online courses and opportunities. Given Nipissing University's student demographic, the spring and summer onsite offerings are not viable since students have other professional and existential commitments that make attending onsite courses difficult in the spring/summer term. The department has been encouraged to offer more online courses in the spring and summer. Currently, the department offers 1 online course in English Studies and 3 online sections of ACADs.

**Provost's Response:** All departments should plan increasingly for programme entry terms other than Fall. The institution is moving towards more robust 12 month operations with the Senate and its Committees functioning throughout the year. The pandemic context will also mean that there will be increasingly a need for developing on-line offerings to support on-site delivery. Curriculum review is a matter for continuous consideration by the Department.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #6:** *The university should clarify to all English Studies members the budgetary relationships between the overall Nipissing enrolments, the English Studies program enrolments, and the number of students registered in English classes. During our visit, the primary reason cited for the university's overall deficit—in which 2015 was the year of financial crisis—was declining enrolments. The statistics we received following our visit indicate that Nipissing has had a gradual increase in enrolments from 2012 to 2019 (peaking in 2017 but down only slightly since, and still higher than 2012). While the number of declared English Studies students is down by about 50%, the number of students taking English courses is down only by 36%. The extent to which these various declines in English relates to the Nipissing deficit is unclear. Department members and administrators should also keep in mind that the overwhelming emphasis on education means that Nipissing students might need six English courses to count towards their “teachables” without actually registering in an English Studies program. As other programs expand at Nipissing, English studies should continuously assess how their offerings can enhance those programs.*

**Unit Response:** We agree that information about how enrolments in English programs and English courses relates to the university's deficit (if any) is an important factor in our continual self-assessment of how our offerings enhance other programs at the university. We take the reviewers' implied point that enrollments in the English Studies degree

programs, along with enrollments in English Studies courses should not be the only definition factor of success and value for our departmental contributions to Nipissing. The university should be committed wholeheartedly to humanities programs even as enrollments cycle through variations in student demand and job markets. For that matter, programmatic value should not be determined by the notion that university education is only about job training. At the same time, we acknowledge that English can broaden its academic connections to other programs in the university as we have done with such courses as science and literature, sport and literature, or illness and literature.

**Dean's Response:** The university has a centralized budget and revenue is based on the total enrolments in both faculties. This is common knowledge at Nipissing University. To promote transparency and further understanding of the institutional, faculty, and departmental budgets, the Dean has regularly informed the Executive (consisting of all Arts and Science Departmental Chairs and Coordinators) of budget details, enrolment totals, and the overall approach to budget distribution. As of June 2020, all Chairs and Coordinators will have access to the institutional dashboard containing various data from acceptances, enrolments, funding & budget, revenue, etc. This will enhance Chairs' and Coordinators' opportunity to plan ahead.

**Provost's Response:** I would support a budget workshop with the Director of Finance with a discussion on how service courses are articulated in the budget.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #7:** *Internationalization aside, another indicator that Nipissing enrolments could increase in the next few years is the fact that more than 25% of teachers in Ontario are already at the common eligible age of retirement or will be within 2 years (See Ontario College of Teachers Annual Reports: <https://reports2018.oct.ca/en/Statistics/Membership-Demographics>). Given that the reason behind the deficit at Nipissing is enrolments, and that this is the rationale behind the lack of departmental renewal, an increase in enrolments should result in an increase in the faculty complement. The reason behind declines in enrolments in English Studies programs in general in North America is the misperception that English majors do not gain good employment. As the English Studies department members are no doubt aware, among those now championing the "value" of the English degree are economists (See: "The world's top economists just made the case for why we still need English majors". <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/10/19/worlds-top-economists-just-made-case-whywe-still-need-english-majors/>). In other words, according to economists the "economic" argument behind the stripping of English studies is no longer accurate. Universities that continue to proceed with this outdated perspective toward English (and fail to plan for enrolment increases) will not only appear out of step with the times, they will also miss out on the opportunity to meet the new demand for English across a variety of sectors.*

**Unit Response:** We agree that any increase in enrolments at Nipissing should result in an increase in faculty complement. We also agree that a degree in English is valuable, for all sorts of reasons. This recommendation would appear to be more directed at student recruitment, advancement and advising, and in that case, we would strongly encourage the universities to adopt a stronger practice of encouraging the study of English as a legitimate path into a variety of professions, not just teaching. The promotion of and recruitment for English Studies should make the economic argument that "narrative matters" and that "stories matter," in every discipline and in every walk of life. Though we have little control over this at the departmental level, we have tried to encourage students to be creative about job markets and post-graduate training to make the most of their employability. For example, we have worked with local companies to place students in writing-related jobs and we have hosted panel presentations with former English graduates in the workforce on "what to do with an English degree (if you don't want to be a teacher)." University support on these initiatives, including liaison help with local businesses and non-profit organizations and budgets for speaker honoraria, would benefit students and our program.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed, but Nipissing University has never shared this perspective. While this is a valid observation, it's a matter of a much broader perspective and cultural sensibility that needs addressing globally, not just institutionally.

**Provost's Response:** Nipissing has, over the last two years, developed that Nipissing promise programme which creates a direct link between students' studies and post-graduation employment. Nipissing firmly believes in the value of humanities as an integral part of its curriculum. Faculty complement planning is a matter of annual academic planning which provides the opportunity to make a case for faculty complement growth.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #8:** *The push for greater diversification among faculty and course offerings is a long-term goal mentioned to us in several interviews. Any faculty expansion or renewal should consider this objective. Most of the Faculty members are relatively near to one another in terms of age and also era of graduate education— they were trained around the same moment and approach the discipline from that perspective. This approach—an emphasis on traditional Anglophone literary periods and genres with a significant complement of courses in popular literature, new media, and cultural studies—is common among English departments today (indeed, some of us teach in departments much more traditional than the English Studies department at Nipissing). Still, diversification must also emphasize renewal in the form of hiring faculty members from a newer generation of scholars.*

**Unit Response:** We agree and would certainly look to more recently-trained applicants (basically anyone who graduated with a PhD in this century) in any hiring searches in the future. One of our practical concerns is that, generationally, the full-time faculty members in the department are of an age, and this creates a practical dilemma when it comes to the question of retirements. When the time comes, will the program disappear without a younger cohort of faculty to sustain it? As the reviewers imply as well, the department is somewhat monocultural. Students and faculty would benefit from wider representation of age and culture

**Dean's Response:** Agreed.

**Provost's Response:** Faculty complement planning is a matter of annual academic planning which provides the opportunity to make a case for faculty complement growth.

#### **Other Recommendations - Maintaining Departmental Strengths**

**External Reviewers Recommendation #9:** *The Department of English Studies should retain its commitment to small classes taught by full time faculty members. This is a great strength of the department and should be both praised and defended.*

**Unit Response:** We are absolutely committed to defending this particular strength and are always receptive to being praised for it. Small classes sizes, we feel, are one of the keys to our programmatic success and especially to our high levels of student satisfaction. What we lack in diversity (above), we make up for in our capacity to build relationships not only within individual classes but over years of students' time in the program. In the small class, students are challenged to think independently and faculty are challenged to work in dialogue with them. This means a high degree of mentorship between faculty and students within and across classrooms. We encourage this university to recognize this as an asset to be celebrated.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. Nipissing University students generally benefit from smaller classes. The Department has provided opportunities for larger classes for Non-Majors. The course caps are balanced and in alignment with the Nipissing University mission.

**Provost's Response:** I concur.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #10:** *The Department members' impressive research productivity should be nurtured and in particular the efforts to bring that research into the classroom should be applauded as helping Nipissing fulfill its mission. Several English Studies professors have published in top-notch scholarly venues while also managing a heavy five-course teaching load. In addition, the fact that faculty members have*

*published articles on pedagogy as well as in their particular areas of disciplinary expertise indicates their devotion to teaching and also remains consistent with the emphasis on education at Nipissing.*

**Unit Response:** As this is more of a commendation than a recommendation, we can only express our pleasure in reading it. However, we also would hope the university can see in this the clearly beneficial relationship between teaching and research. Our department serves as an exemplar of the full integration of scholarship and pedagogy which has served as an ideal for the university sector as a whole, albeit one that is fast disappearing elsewhere under pressures of cost-cutting and efficiency. Furthermore, we would like to work with the university to increase the profile and recognition of our research accomplishments.

**Dean's Response: Agreed.** The Department has contributed greatly to Nipissing University's research, teaching, and service. The Faculty of Arts and Science Dean is committed to cultivating, promoting, and supporting Arts and Science faculty's research.

**Provost's Response:** I agree, and encourage English Studies to maintain an active dialogue with the Dean of Research to ensure the humanities perspectives they represent are integrated in Nipissing's Research plans and strategic directions.

#### **Other Recommendations: Possible Classroom Alterations**

**External Reviewers Recommendation #11:** *Both faculty and students expressed a concern that the grading standards in English Studies were more stringent than those of the broader institution. Since this is an empirical question that can be answered easily we recommend an institutional analysis of grade distributions by department. Often these discrepancies are more reputational than actual.*

**Unit Response:** We support this recommendation for an institutional analysis of grade distributions by department. We are sure we are not the only department that feels this concern about our grading standards working to drive students to take courses in other disciplines that are perceived, rightly or wrongly, to have higher grading averages. We might also encourage a wider university conversation about grade inflation and its relationship to student retention.

**Dean's Response:** Further discussions about grading standards in the Faculty of Arts and Science will unfold. Having said that, the English Studies grading practices are comparable to other disciplines and their grades fall within the institutional average.

**Provost's Response:** This discussion can be led by the Dean of Teaching

**External Reviewers Recommendation #12:** *Wide dissatisfaction with the website as a tool to enhance student learning was expressed. Finding course outlines, faculty information, or updates on Departmental events and achievements all proved challenging or impossible to locate. We suggest the Department continue to strive to see how their information can be put on the University website in a more user-friendly manner and develop their own digital tools to fill ongoing gaps in communicating with students.*

**Unit Response:** We know frustration with the website goes beyond departments such as ours to the Faculty of Arts and Science as a whole, and perhaps to the whole university also. As for as the suggestion to develop our own digital tools goes, we would welcome help with that project that, in larger universities, would be provided by a departmental administrative assistant.

**Dean's Response: Agreed.** The institution has invested in more staffing of the External Relations and Communications departments. The Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science, has also been active in promoting Arts and Science programs on the Arts and Science webpage and Arts and Science social media platforms. During the

Arts and Science Retreat to be held in early August, a plan on promoting Arts and Science programs will be outlined and discussed.

**Provost's Response:** This is being addressed by the University.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #13:** *The Department of English Studies has explored several innovations with internal and external partners which for a variety of reasons have not come into fruition. The Theatre and Performance initiatives seem particularly valuable and if partnership with Canadore proves impossible then other partners should be considered.*

**Unit Response:** We are amenable to this suggestion. Given the uncertainty related to COVID-19, which could greatly alter college programs such as theatre and performing arts that are necessarily physical and in-person, it may be fruitful to more fully revisit this idea at a later date.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. While a joint program with Canadore would be an excellent addition, there are many opportunities for the department to expand its Theatre and Performance offerings outside the potential link with Canadore. North Bay has a well-established theatre and arts community, so there are lots of opportunities for collaboration, continuing education, and outreach. There are also opportunities to connect with other universities and colleges. The department is certainly encouraged to broaden its scope and partnership with theatre and arts experts who are not necessarily linked to Nipissing University or Canadore.

**Provost's Response:** I would be happy to receive proposals that strengthen performing arts at Nipissing.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #14:** *Students felt ill prepared for Honours seminars which suggests more varied classroom techniques and assignments in second or third year might be useful, such as reducing the amount of lecture material and giving students more experience with flipped classrooms and other pedagogical innovations. However, there was a limited sample group of students, so we acknowledge such activities are probably already being implemented given the faculty members' universal devotion to best teaching.*

**Unit Response:** We think this is a good suggestion for individual instructors of 3000-level courses to take on and for us all to share with each other any pedagogical innovations we come up with. For example, one faculty member had scheduled a "seminar week" into their syllabus for this winter in their third-year class while others are requiring students to do presentations and independent research projects. We welcome the opportunity to coordinate these efforts in creative and consistent way. On the curricular level, we will revisit an idea we've had before to develop a third-year seminar.

**Dean's Response:** I agree with the department that sharing pedagogical strategies and modelling/integrating discussion in all upper-year courses can bolster students' ability to participate in and to the Honours seminar discussion.

**Provost's Response:** I would recommend engaging the Dean of Teaching in discussions on how to ensure pedagogical diversity in classrooms.

**External Reviewer Recommendation #15:** *Student clubs are an important aspect of maintaining relationships in small institutions and the Department should identify students in first year and encourage them to become engaged in organizing English student events and Literature based events for the broader community (this can only be done effectively in conjunction with recommendation 3).*

**Unit Response:** We agree with both this recommendation and the proviso that it can only be done in conjunction with recommendation 3. If we could assign this mentoring work to a faculty member in exchange for a 3-credit course release, we could make big improvements in this area.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. The department has been excellent in fostering students' events and community outreach activities.

**Provost's Response:** Workload proposals can be submitted to the Dean, as work loading remains a decanal prerogative.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #16:** *Faculty has both interest in and expertise for teaching Film Studies courses and these are increasingly becoming central to English Studies programs. Any "territorial" restrictions regarding teaching film, digital media, and other cultural productions should not restrict materials and courses taught by English Studies.*

**Unit Response:** We heartily agree with this recommendation. In particular we need to revisit the discussions we have had in the past with the Department of Fine and Performing Arts over who may offer courses with "Film" in the title as part of their programs.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. There are no such restrictions. Film courses are taught by other disciplines as well: GESJ, History, English Studies, and Fine Arts. At the moment, we offer a Minor in Film which is housed in the Fine Arts department. As the programming grows, further discussions will unfold.

**Provost's Response:** Agreed.

### Program Structure

**External Reviewers Recommendation #17:** *The primary question we were asked (and concur is the paramount consideration) concerns whether the program's requirements and structure around national literature and historical periods is out of step with contemporary literary studies, and particularly with the teaching of English studies at this time. Perhaps on the surface the program has a traditional appearance, but it has been adjusted to recognize disciplinary changes through the pedagogical techniques employed and the non-traditional material taught within that traditional course structure. Given the unlikelihood of significant faculty change or expansion in the near future and the strength and success of the existing programs, we do not recommend that the Department re-write its modules but we do suggest that each course consider the following recommendations. We appreciate that some courses already employ some of what we will recommend be more broadly adopted. The department's embrace of popular culture and multimedia works—to the extent there are now numerous new courses based entirely on these new and nontraditional "literary" works—is particularly impressive and, we suspect, unsurpassed by most Ontario English programs.*

**Unit Response:** We appreciate this general advice and since we are not a change-for-change's-sake group of people, commit ourselves to continuing to do what we do well. We think it is important to recognize the success in this seemingly traditional grounding, and add that the programmatic foundation represents the integration between teaching and research productivity highlighted in Recommendation #10. We might further add that this sustained feature of the program is linked to the lack of new tenure-track positions: the current faculty complement was hired in an era when historical periods were the main defining rubric of English Studies. Thus, we have maintained a high degree of consistency with our original disciplinary areas while, at the same time, each of us has found ways to expand these boundaries to keep up with the changing discipline and student interests. We feel that this strikes a good balance.

**Dean's Response:** I agree with the department that striking a balance between historical literary traditions, popular culture, and multimedia texts is essential to delivering high quality programming in English Studies. The department has expanded some of its offerings and is encouraged to continue to add further courses in the areas of indigenous, world, diasporic, film, and multimedia texts while providing students with a foundational grounding in the discipline.

**Provost's Response:** Nothing to add.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #18:** *The data shows continuous decline in English courses since 2012 but no particular course or area driving that decline. Rather, the lower enrollment seems to align with disciplinary norms across Canadian universities. Unlike some Ontario universities, Nipissing students do indicate a major upon entering universities so it is imperative that the Department continues to work closely with the Registrar's office to ensure recruiters can articulate the value of the degree and its courses. Given that, according to the recruiters with whom we spoke, the number one cited advertisement for the desirability of the English Studies degree at Nipissing is small class sizes, an increase in these class sizes should not be entertained let alone implemented. On the whole (not just in the area of recruiting specifically) the university seems to rely on the high number of students working towards becoming teachers. Communications about other post-degree opportunities for English students could be more deliberate in recruiters' efforts to expand the possibilities in the minds of students.*

**Unit Response:** We welcome any initiatives to work more closely with recruiting and we are committed to keeping our class sizes small. Regarding post-degree opportunities for English students, see our response to Recommendation 7.

**Dean's Response:** This recommendation has been partly addressed in section (f). The Humanities enrolments at Nipissing University have been steadily declining, but as reaffirmed by institutional, regional, and national data on enrolments, this trend is not unique to Nipissing. In fact, the overall enrolments in the Humanities (and more specifically, in the English Studies program) over the past few years, have been steady and relatively healthy for a smaller, primarily undergraduate institution like Nipissing. The Recruitment team has been very active in promoting Arts and Science programs and has been successful in attracting students to the English Studies program. Nonetheless, we strive to further our recruitment strategies in close collaboration between the Dean's Office, the Registrar Office, Recruitment, and the Office of Institutional Planning and Research Office.

**Provost's Response:** I concur.

**External Reviewer Recommendation #19:** *The Honours Specialization requires English 2006 British Literature Before 1800. The enrollment numbers in this course remain healthy and it remains a valuable course for students.*

**Unit Response:** If we revisit the gateway requirement of this course, we will certainly keep this positive assessment in mind.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed.

**Provost's Response:** Nothing to add.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #20:** *The required courses in Literary History 1 and Literary History 2 can be maintained effectively but emphasis needs to be placed on how the literature in these courses is in conversation with more contemporary texts. Further altering syllabi to increase the thematic rather than historical aspects would reduce some traditional coverage but enable the courses to better align with contemporary norms. Students did give several examples of English courses that were taught with a thematic approach, but also, in somewhat contradictory statements, they felt there was a clear distinction between courses that were more conventionally English courses and courses that were more innovative, fun, and possibly—as gleaned by the students—peripheral. Professors might consider a more deliberate blurring of this perceived boundary between the two, whether in terms of course design, explanation of developments and debates within the discipline, explicit links between English learning outcomes and broader social and cultural*

*values, and/or the transferable skills developed by studying nation/period-based literary traditions and contemporary works.*

**Unit Response:** This recommendation aligns with our continual self-assessment of our courses, both historical and thematic. The suggestion here about making explicit links between our learning outcomes and broader social and cultural values and/or transferable skills seems timely considering the university's plan to revisit learning outcomes throughout the institution

**Dean's Response:** I agree with this recommendation. As noted in the departmental response, the department continues to work on bolstering the learning outcomes of required courses and enhancing their approaches to diverse literary traditions.

**Provost's Response:** Nothing to add

**External Reviewers Recommendation #21:** *Further topical courses such as Narratives of Teaching; Eco-Criticism and Literature; Literature and Medicine; and Literature and the Working World, to give a few examples, could be taught using existing faculty expertise and expand interest beyond those enrolled in English Studies modules. Based on course content, such courses could easily be fit into the Literary History categories without being restricted to a specific time period or nationality. Both at Nipissing and across the sector there is a strong student interest in courses in Creative Writing and possibilities of expanding these offerings should also be considered.*

**Unit Response:** The suggestion to incorporate more topic courses into our Literary History courses is interesting and deserves serious departmental discussion over the next couple of years. We certainly want to expand our courses in Creative Writing and have just put three one-credit Creative Writing courses on the Academic Calendar. However, since these courses have to be taught by part-time instructors, our offerings depend on the university's part-time budget.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. The department has been dedicated to expanding its creative writing and media offerings.

**Provost's Response:** Nothing to add

**External Reviewers Recommendation #22:** *A tactic to consider is to offer courses with separate grading rubrics for those taking them to meet a degree or Arts credit requirement and those who want to take the course as an optional elective. These dual rubrics have been used to increase English enrollments and interest at other institutions.*

**Unit Response:** We will definitely discuss this idea both among ourselves and with the Registrar's office, since dual registrations may be logistically challenging.

**Dean's Response:** I agree with the department that dual rubrics would pose significant challenges and would not be necessarily in the best interest of our students. Nonetheless, the recommendation is worth exploring. To some extent, the department is already offering a version of such a tactic in the form of its course/s for non-Majors where the grading rubric differs from the more traditional assessment methods deployed in required courses.

**Provost's Response:** This discussion can be had in the context of the grading discussion recommended earlier.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #23:** *Dual rubrics can also be valuable in expanding experiential learning opportunities. At small institutions, it can be difficult to find experiential placements for all students. Having two*

*paths to completing course requirements, one with an experiential component and one without, would allow the program to diversify learning opportunities.*

**Unit Response:** We are aware of this possibility and, indeed, it already exists in one of our courses that has an experiential learning option (Shakespeare). The broader point about community placements is certainly not lost on us. To meet the challenge of finding appropriate experiential learning opportunities, we have opted to build them into the fabric of several new courses: our 1-credit skills courses were passed at Senate in April 2020, and can be marked as experiential learning courses when that process begins.

**Dean's Response:** As noted above, this is worth further exploration.

**Provost's Response:** This discussion can be had in the context of the grading discussion recommended earlier.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #24:** *The program remains lacking in courses particularly devoted to Literary and Cultural Theory. Theory courses do not naturally attract large numbers of students but an emphasis on the work of contemporary theorists does underpin much contemporary literary studies and the research of faculty members. Rather than mount particular Theory courses, it would seem better to incorporate greater theoretical material in courses such as the topics courses proposed in Recommendation 21.*

**Unit Response:** We acknowledge the validity of this concern and recommendation and affirm that the question of when and how to teach theory to students has been the subject of ongoing discussion over the years. In our last program overhaul, we replaced the former third year Theory and Criticism Course with an updated version, ENGL 3066 Get Smart: Strategies for Understanding Culture; however, this course has only been offered once, with mixed success. At first year, we introduced a new course, ENGL 1027 Reading Culture, which offers students a cultural studies approach to non-print media and includes an introduction to cultural theory. This course has been offered once with strong success and a great deal of creative and effortful teaching. On the whole, however, faculty have chosen to incorporate theoretical readings where appropriate into their upper year courses, and to further integrate theory into the structures and approaches of their courses. For example, rather than requiring students to read psychoanalytic or postcolonial theory, texts and topics are taught from those perspectives. The incorporation of theory already in practice outlined above may not offer adequate preparation for students, especially those few who go on to graduate students, so the department is committed to returning to this discussion by undertaking an informal survey of how and where theory is already being taught, and how that practice might be enhanced.

**Dean's Response:** Agreed. While literary and cultural theory does not attract student enrollments, it is absolutely necessary for students to have at least foundational knowledge of literary and cultural theoretical traditions to analyze texts critically and methodically. Furthermore, research shows that theoretical thinking enhances students' academic potential and success.

**Provost's Response:** Nothing to add

**External Reviewer Recommendation #25:** *Expansion of course offerings through co-teaching with other Departments has been successful for both English Studies and the institution in general. The Department should continue to expand these relationships.*

**Unit Response:** Some of us have enjoyed our small forays into interdisciplinary co-teaching and would welcome to opportunity to do more. For example, Sarah Winters has co-taught ENGL/RLCT 2127 The Bible as Cultural Text with Susan Srigley from Religions and Cultures with great success, and they are doing so again in 2021. Future ideas include the possibility of developing a co-taught course on the literature and geography of west or southern Africa, between Gyllian Phillips and a member of the Geography Department. In addition, co-teaching could be a fruitful way to expand our offerings in Indigenous culture, literatures and media (see Recommendation 1). However from a practical

standpoint, Arts and Science faculty have been told that co-teaching will be limited to only one or two courses per year for the entire Faculty, so that limits our ability to expand the number of offerings in English.

**Dean's Response:** I agree with the reviewers. Co-teaching is an excellent way of promoting diverse approaches to literature. The department has been active in collaborating with other programs on dialogue courses, for example. As noted in the Faculty of Arts and Science Recommendations document, the Faculty of Arts and Science is committed to supporting team-teaching opportunities to promote cross-, trans-, and inter-disciplinary dialogue.

**Provost's Response:** The opportunity has been defined in the Collective Agreement.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #26:** *The self-study and comments made at the site visit indicate that on many occasions English Studies department members spent numerous hours on new initiatives that ended up not being carried out for various reasons, including lack of funding support. More advance planning and better communication between the department and the administration are needed in order to sustain the momentum and desire for new ideas within the department and to create better efficiency in terms of labour undertaken.*

**Unit Response:** We heartily endorse the need for better planning and communication in future efforts to “innovate” programming. This recommendation takes up, in a tactful way, the frustration felt by department members, especially perhaps chairs, who have been asked to consider various ways to expand the disciplinary boundaries of English into other exciting opportunities for students, like Theatre Studies, Media Studies, and Digital Humanities, only to have those ventures squashed after a great deal of effort has been invested. Many meetings, hours of planning, and writing have gone into collaborative initiatives that never see the light of day or are cancelled for lack of funding (as with Digital Humanities). The department feels that our communication to partners outside the department, whether administration, Canadore, or other departments at Nipissing, has been clear, responsible and persistent, but do not feel that effort has been returned. Therefore, we are wary of any future requests to enter into collaborative agreements that carry substantial program implications.

**Dean's Response:** I agree. While these initiatives have been supported by the decanal office, budgetary constraints and deficit have their further development and implementation difficult. Nonetheless, with annual academic planning underway, I am confident that there will be opportunities for new initiatives to flourish.

**Provost's Response:** I believe the Faculty of Arts and Science has developed processes to have these conversations.

### **Academic Writing**

**External Reviewers Recommendation #27:** *That Nipissing University should retain a first-year course in Academic Writing and articulate its value to incoming students.*

**Unit Response:** We agree with this recommendation. The majority of students who come to Nipissing do so unprepared to write academic essays and need to learn the skills taught in ACAD1601. English Studies, like other disciplines in the Humanities, and perhaps more than any of those other disciplines, teaches essay-writing skills in all of its courses, but just like any other discipline has other skills to teach as well as content, and cannot devote all 36 instructional hours of a 3-credit course to the skills of research, summary, paraphrase, response, academic honesty, paraphrasing, revision and editing that are covered in ACAD1601.

**Dean's Response:** I agree that students benefit from taking academic writing courses, especially in the first year of their studies. However, whether or not academic writing courses should remain a breadth requirement will be further discussed at the Faculty and institutional level.

**Provost's Response:** I think the conversation needs to continue on the role of ACAD and their relationship to other programmes and Departments.

**External Reviewers Recommendation #28:** *That a committee be struck including but not limited to representation from students, administration, ACAD faculty, English Faculty, and other Arts and Science faculty to examine the role of ACAD going forward.*

*--the committee would consider whether or not there are students currently required to take the course who should not be required to do so.*

*--the committee should determine how the course fits into the faculty wide "arts requirement"*

*--the committee should consider whether the course could better serve the students if more closely connected to future student work by having separate variations for Arts, Science, Social Science, and perhaps Nursing.*

*--the committee should clarify the administrative and budgetary relationship of the course to the Department of English Studies.*

**Unit Response:** We support this recommendation and are willing to contribute to the work that such a committee would do. We feel strongly that the committee should not be chaired by anyone from English Studies, and would suggest the Dean of Teaching for that role.

**Dean's Response:** I agree with the recommendation. The department has already begun the consultative process with other departments.

**Provost's Response:** I agree.

#### D. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Cyclical Program Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or unit identified as responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken and monitoring the progress of the action.

1. RECOMMENDATION: FACULTY COMPLEMENT	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT (FOR RESOURCES)
To explore a cross-appointment with English Studies and Indigenous Studies (recs. 1 in report)	English Studies/Indigenous Studies
	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT (FOR TAKING ACTION)
	Dean of Arts and Science explores with Faculty member
MONITORING INTERVAL(S): -	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: June 2021
2. RECOMMENDATION: CURRICULA	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT (FOR RESOURCES)
To develop diversified curricula so that it supports, among other things, 12 month studying opportunities and multiple annual entry points in to the programme (recs. 5,8,13,16,17,19,20,21,24,25 in report)	English Studies
	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT (FOR TAKING ACTION)
	Chair as part of annual academic planning
MONITORING INTERVAL(S):Annual	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: Annual

3. RECOMMENDATION: BUDGET WORKSHOP	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR RESOURCES)</i>
To understand the connection between English Studies and University budgeting organize a budget workshop available to the Department (rec. 6 in report)	Dean of Arts and Science RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR TAKING ACTION)</i> Director of Finance
MONITORING INTERVAL(S): -	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: June 2021
4. RECOMMENDATION: RESEARCH	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR RESOURCES)</i>
To strengthen the connection between English Studies and University strategies for support of research Department plan for implementation of the University's Strategic Research Plan (rec. 10 in report)	Chair/Dean of Arts and Science RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR TAKING ACTION)</i> Dean of Research
MONITORING INTERVAL(S):	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: June 2021
5. RECOMMENDATION: GRADING STANDARDS	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR RESOURCES)</i>
To explore grading standards and models across Nipissing (recs. 11,22,23 in report)	Dean of Teaching RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR TAKING ACTION)</i> Teaching and Learning Committee (Senate)
MONITORING INTERVAL(S): -	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: June 2021
6. RECOMMENDATION: PEDAGOGY	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR RESOURCES)</i>
To increase pedagogical diversity in English Studies explore pedagogical models not currently used by the programme. (rec. 14 in report)	Chair with Department RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR TAKING ACTION)</i> Chair with Department
MONITORING INTERVAL(S): Annual	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: Annual
7. RECOMMENDATION: ACAD	RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR RESOURCES)</i>
To explore the role, function and opportunity of ACAD courses in various programmes. (recs. 27,28 in report)	Provost with Dean of Arts and Science RESPONSIBLE POSITION/UNIT <i>(FOR TAKING ACTION)</i> Provost with Dean of Arts and Science
MONITORING INTERVAL(S):	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE: June 2021