

Implementation Report on the 2018-2019 Cyclical Review of the Medieval and Medievalism Studies Program

Authored by: Robin Waugh

Date: March 20, 2022

INTRODUCTION

This is the first implementation report for the Medieval and Medievalism Studies cyclical review that took place in 2018-2019. The full language for each recommendation from the External Reviewers’ Report has been included, along with the corresponding information about implementation from the Final Assessment Report. For each recommendation, the unit has provided an update on the progress or action made toward the implementation of that recommendation, followed by comments from the relevant dean(s) and the Program Review Sub-Committee. Taking into account the updates provided by the unit and the comments from the dean(s), the Program Review Sub-Committee will review the report and determine if all recommendations have been implemented satisfactorily or if a subsequent report will be required.

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers’ Report: Recommendation #1: Continue to maintain the current balance between Medieval and Medievalism Studies.			
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#1 Maintain current balance between Unit streams	Department	Ongoing	Dean suggested consideration of a possible, carefully calibrated shift in stream offerings based on student demand

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. The balance between offerings in medieval studies and medievalism studies remains innovative in terms of content, efficient and practical to maintain, fitting with instructors’ skills and research projects, and integrated creatively into the intellectual community within the Faculties of Arts and Music and the University at large. Each curriculum change occurs as part of the larger responsibility of achieving the more comprehensive learning goals of the Program, together with the aims of the university as expressed in the latest academic plan. Since 2018-19, student demand has been in the forefront of curriculum renewal as we have created one new course, Dungeons and Dragons (ML300 for 2023), and updated two existing courses:

ML103 Digital Valhallas (replacing a course in Skyrim only) and ML104 The Middle Ages on Television (replacing a course on Game of Thrones only, ML102). Many courses have been added to the program’s list of cognate courses, particularly in the discipline of archaeology, and one of those (AR230: Fakes, Frauds and Mysteries) expands the medievalism course offerings. Courses of at least 50% medieval or medievalism content continue to be added to the cognate list as Departments create them. The Medievalism Option remains popular and distinguishes the Program from almost all others in North America.

Decanal Comments: The program has introduced curricular changes in response to this recommendation and it does not require further attention.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee appreciates the program’s examples of the ways in which it has aimed to maintain and/or improve the balance between the streams in response to this recommendation. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers’ Report: Recommendation #2: Maintain ML 402 as an innovative teaching/learning experience.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#2 Maintain ML402 innovative teaching	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. ML402, our teaching practicum seminar, has grown more popular in recent years. Students often express interest in this course/practicum early in their degree programs, and competition for placement is tough, with only 8 spots available to match the tutorial needs of ML101, ML103 or ML104. ML402 counts as one of the few courses in humanities offerings in the Faculty of Arts that can count as experiential learning under government guidelines. Experiential learning is an integral part of the University’s Strategy and a stated aim of WLU’s most recent Strategic Mandate Agreement. This year, with decanal support, we were able to employ not only two of the strongest students from our Fall term offering of ML402 to work as Instructional Assistants running tutorials in our Winter term offering of ML100, but also two students from ML402 who are working as markers for ML100. We hope to continue providing these paid positions to students who excel in our teaching practicum seminar, which is a very useful recruitment tool. Other programs have expressed strong interest in the program’s efficient and incremental employment of our best students as IAs.

Decanal Comments: The Dean supports the continuation of ML402. This does not require further attention.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee agrees that since this recommendation was to maintain what is already being done in ML402 (which sounds like a very valuable learning experience for students), this recommendation can be considered completed and no further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #3: Consider the development of a team-taught ML 400 capstone course.			
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#3 Consider team-teaching ML400	Department	September 2019	Unit will discuss possibility for 2019-2020 academic year

Unit Update: Not fulfilled, though the program believes it has fulfilled the intention of this recommendation. Team-teaching ML400 has not proved to be practical in terms of the allocation of resources by academic units. A part of a course has to be administered so that a faculty member's yearly teaching allotment can be made whole over a reasonable time span. ML400 is not offered every year, so such reconciling cannot meet current budget schedules. That said, the program has been careful to provide disciplinary variety and at least some choice in its own capstone seminar and in its cognate 400-level offerings.

Decanal Comments: Team teaching is indeed difficult to coordinate from a budgetary perspective and I am satisfied with this response. No further attention is required.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee appreciates that this recommendation has scheduling and resources implications that may not make it practical to implement. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #4: Support further iterations of the travel course (or new courses).				
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Responsibility for Resourcing	Additional Notes
#4 Support further travel courses	Department and Dean	Ongoing	Dean	The process for determining the number of travel courses in the FoA is already in place

Unit Update: Fulfilled in intention. The Program was in the process of proposing travel courses in every year of the pandemic, but international travel proved to be not advisable for reasons of safety. The Associate Dean of Arts asks for expressions of interest for travel courses well in advance of the courses being offered, and we responded to the Associate Dean's request for the 2022-23 academic year, so a travel course is part of our ongoing curriculum planning and budget projections. Our second-year travel course engages students through

the innovative delivery of course material right at the sites that witnessed the development of important events during the early Middle Ages: Hadrian’s Wall, the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, and the unique display of the Sutton Hoo treasure at the British Museum. Travel courses are powerful recruitment tools at promotional events, and a medieval-themed travel course tends to attract student interest every time we have advertised it.

Decanal Comments: The Dean of Arts will support travel courses in summer 2023 and if the program puts forward a proposal for one, we will support it.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee recognizes that implementation of this recommendation has not been feasible over the past two academic years due to the pandemic and is pleased to see support from the Faculty of Arts encouraging the program to submit a proposal for a travel course during 2023. Should it be possible to safely offer this learning experience in the coming year, the program is encouraged to pursue it. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers’ Report: Recommendation #5: Ensure that innovation in pedagogy and assessment is consistently aligned with program-level learning outcomes.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#5 Ensure innovative pedagogy and assessment is in line with program learning outcomes	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. Our courses continue to provide innovative pedagogical techniques, including “flipped” classroom activities, role-playing opportunities, and creative assignments that demonstrate skills in digitization and other technological abilities, all while maintaining rigorous means of assessment and painstaking alignment with the Program’s learning outcomes. Most notable in this regard are the ongoing contributions of Prof. Alicia McKenzie, the 2016 CTF recipient of Laurier’s Award for Teaching Excellence in Innovation. When the pandemic meant a wholesale shift to remote learning methods, the program’s instructors adjusted their pedagogy, learning pathways, and assignments to meet this immediate need. Equally, the shift back to in-person learning has gone relatively smoothly, considering the many adjustments in day-to-day teaching practice that are inherent to such broad and consequential changes.

Decanal Comments: The program actively supports innovative teaching in response to this recommendation and it does not require further attention.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The program is encouraged to maintain its innovative teaching and learning activities, while also ensuring that these methods remain aligned with course and program level learning outcomes. If the program does not already have a curriculum map to demonstrate the alignment between program learning outcomes and its courses, this may be a worthwhile activity to pursue in order to document these relationships, which can be beneficial for ensuring a collective understanding of the role that each course plays in developing students’ knowledge and skills. If the program has already created a curriculum

map for this purpose, a periodic review of it to ensure its accuracy is recommended. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #6: Consider more carefully the range of skills that students bring to non-traditional assignments and explicitly scaffold learning in labs and tutorials.			
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#6 Consider range of skills for students and created scaffold learning in appropriate classes	Department	September 2020	Connected to FoA draft Strategic Plan

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. By being independent, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary, the program can cover a comprehensive variety of skills for students in a way that more discipline-specific degrees simply cannot. Our unique inter-faculty connection with Music together with our many cross-Arts links means that technical vocabularies can be learned and applied across surprisingly diverse bodies of knowledge. Scaffolded learning for written assignments is one of our core pedagogical principles, observable in many of our outlines for our program and cognate courses, and particularly for our core courses. In one class, for instance, students prepare a proposal that presents the student's research question for their final term paper. The proposal describes any significant research material and plans and offers a preliminary bibliography for the term paper. The student then receives feedback on the proposal, and, after doing further research, delivers a seminar presentation based on their term paper topic to the class. After 2 stages of constructive feedback from the instructor and 1 stage of peer review, the student only then submits their term paper in finalized form. Scaffolding is also integral to our system of using IAs, who can instruct students in written assignments from a fellow-student's point of view. This kind of integrated, incremental learning makes up a significant part of WLU's academic plan.

Decanal Comments: As above, the program actively supports innovative teaching in response to this recommendation and it does not require further attention.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The comments provided indicate that the program is already attuned to the importance of ensuring skills are scaffolded across courses in the program. The types of recommendations that were made to the program by the review committee, and the program's comments, demonstrate the program's commitment to the use of innovative teaching practices within the program, which is commendable. No further reporting is required.

<p>Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #7: Improve the relationship between cognate and ML courses and course offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consistently and transparently cross-list courses offered in Medieval Studies. b. Give students better information on course availability. c. Drop “zombie” courses from the listing in the interests of transparency. 		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#7 Improve information about course offerings	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. We continue to list our cognate and program courses in the University calendar, and majors can and do generally consult with the Coordinator on matters of what might count toward students' degrees. Any enrolment snags and other problems are dealt with quickly and smoothly; the number of majors has not grown to beyond what the Coordinator can manage on this front. Actual cross-listing of courses runs into problems at the Registrar's Office. We have used promotional events to advertise course offerings, and video advertising of courses has also proved effective. Innovations in curriculum are showcased in our annual Newsletter, and our courses generally fill to their capacities. We also produce an annual undergraduate handbook in Spring to help students plan for the coming year. This handbook is emailed directly to ML and prospective ML students and its content is displayed on the Program billboard on the 4th floor of the Woods building. We have retired one course (ML102) that will no longer be offered, and next year we will eliminate ML401 The Medieval Book, a course that has not been taught since the retirement of a medievalist in the English Department, who was not replaced (it looked as if other faculty members might take up the course, but this has not happened). One course that has never been taught, ML388: Medieval Studies Travel Course, will remain on the books in case a full-time faculty member wishes to teach it; our other travel course (ML288) is designed for CTF instruction in conjunction with a Residence Learning Community (Camelot Hall). The pandemic has made the promotion of courses more challenging than was the case previously, but we believe that we are managing.

Decanal Comments: This is challenging but the program is making its best efforts. This does not need to be revisited in the future.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee appreciates the examples provided by the programs of the ways in which it has already and continues to address this recommendation in its course scheduling and advertising practices. The program is encouraged to delete any courses from the academic calendar which are not likely to be taught in the future in order to provide students with a realistic sense of the courses available to them. No further reporting on this recommendation is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #8: Examine the benefits of moving the program's administration to an associated program: any such move should be careful to respect the autonomy of the program and its distinctive profile.			
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#8 Explore benefits of administrative combination with another academic unit	Department and Dean	September 2020	Connected to FoA draft Strategic Plan

Unit Update: Fulfilled. We have explored the benefits of moving the program's administration to an associated program. Coordinators have discussed this possibility with the Dean of Arts and consulted with other Program Coordinators about their proposed or ongoing mergers. The ML steering committee has discussed the general strategy behind administrative combinations, and mergers with specific Departments in Arts. We have observed that other programs at Laurier have indicated their interest in merging with us, but ML has decided that the autonomy of our Program and its distinctive profile would be vulnerable if such an administrative move took place. We recognise that all other independent small programs in Arts have been absorbed into larger administrative structures, but we would hasten to point out that such programs have largely lost their momentum along with their independence: Cultural Studies, North American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies are not as prominent as they once were, while Medieval and Medievalism Studies continues to recruit highly committed students and otherwise maintain an elevated profile. A designated, independent Coordinator is crucial for the maintenance of the Program's distinctiveness and energy.

Decanal Comments: While the Dean of Arts recognizes that ML values its autonomy and is a very strong program in and of itself, clearly its long-term well being will be contingent upon building closer ties with an established department as full-time ML faculty approach retirement. We encourage further discussion along these lines in the coming years.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee appreciates the program's concern about implementing this recommendation but also supports the dean's assessment that this recommendation should not be lost sight of in the future. The committee believes that direction on this recommendation will continue to be provided through the Faculty and Dean of Arts and therefore, does not require any further reporting on it.

<p>Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #9: Examine the options for stabilizing the staffing of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. cross-list one (or more) of the tenured faculty in Medieval Studies, possibly on a rotating basis; b. provide key CAS faculty in the program with as much stability as practically possible.

Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
# 9 Examine options for stabilizing instructional staff	Department and Dean	Ongoing

Unit Update: The Program believes it has fulfilled this recommendation to the best of its ability, recognizing that its fulfillment would arrive from program funding decisions situated beyond its responsibilities. The Program has cooperated with Archaeology and Heritage Studies in maintaining a cross-listed, full-time LTA position, when possible. Unfortunately, budget considerations have got in the way of leveraging further full-time teaching within the Program. ML looks forward to the day when full-time positions, cross-listed or otherwise, would render the Program more firmly anchored and hence more stable. Contract faculty receive as much stability as the Collective Agreement allows: seniority in courses, standing appointments, and other kinds of employment security. The Program remains exceptionally proud of the quality of the Program’s teaching from full-timers and contract faculty alike.

Decanal Comments: ML has done the best it can with limited resources. The Dean of Arts will continue to consider the needs for ML staffing as it looks to assign the limited resources available.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee understands that implementation of this recommendation is not within the full control of the program. The program is encouraged to continue to advocate for a more stable faculty complement for the program as it is able to. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers’ Report: Recommendation #12: Maintain the relationship with the Career Development Centre and refine the career development objectives to cohere with program learning outcomes.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#12 Maintain relationship with Career Centre	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. Career-focussed events have been more challenging to arrange during the pandemic, but our graduates remain eminently employable, as Career Development Centre statistics indicate. The latest figures from this Centre are from 2020. Out of 12 graduates, 9 responded to the careers survey, with 66.7 percent of graduates pursuing further education, and 33.3 percent of students looking for work. According to Katherine St. Louis in the Career Development Centre, these results match the results of other Laurier Programs during this pandemic time, and Laurier students continue to show strong employability. Statistics generated by the Career Development Centre appear on the Program website and are updated by the employees of this Centre every year.

Decanal Comments: The Dean of Arts encourages ongoing engagement with the Career Development Centre.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee agrees with the comments provided by the Dean that the program is encouraged to maintain its ties with the Career Development Centre. Hopefully, there will be opportunities to reinstate the career-focused events in the program in the coming years. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #13: Continue to promote the transferable skills developed in the program.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#13 Continue to promote transferable skills	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. We continue to spotlight the many especially marketable skills that our graduates have put to use in their careers, in post-graduate study, museum management, teaching, and elsewhere: artifact conservation, acting, sales, teaching, game-design, digital landscapes, oral communication, written communication, systems analysis, performance review, management, and many others. For instance, an account of an alumnus/a's specific career development path, with discussion of exactly how skills learned at Laurier within the Medieval and Medievalism Studies Program have helped to secure that path, appears in our annual Newsletter and on the Program website. Right now, the website features Brenna Cook, a specialist in medieval costume.

Decanal Comments: The Dean of Arts encourages continued exploration of how best to help students translate their learning into transferrable skills for future careers. No further review is required at present.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: This recommendation is one of many made by the review committee to "maintain" existing practices, which is an indicator of the strength of these initiatives. The program is encouraged to continue emphasizing to students the transferable skills that they are developing and to help them understand how to communicate their competencies as they seek employment. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #14: Focus on tracking alumni 5-10 years out of the program to get a better sense of long-term outcomes.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#14 Keep track of alumni	Department	Ongoing

Unit Update: Fulfilled and ongoing. We continue to track our alumni's progress through their careers and in their relationships with the University. We showcase an alumnus/alumna in every issue of the program Newsletter. We find that our alumni are extremely loyal to the program and constantly indicate their

understanding of and their appreciation for their academic development at WLU. The Medieval Students Society has consistently been one of the strongest on the Waterloo campus. This volunteer group helps in the organization and running of special events and in keeping contact with our graduates.

Decanal Comments: The Dean of Arts encourages continued tracking of alumni. No further review is required at present.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: Maintaining connections with program alumni is a strong practice with many benefits. Alumni can provide the program with feedback on how the program curriculum has supported their further education or career journey, as well as where there may be gaps. Current students will inevitably benefit from hearing from program alumni to better understand the opportunities that an ML degree can provide for them. It sounds like the program is doing a great job at forging these connections and is encouraged to continue doing so. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #15: Examine the possibilities for developing advanced learner non-credit courses tailored to the needs of the gaming (or other entertainment) industry.			
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#15 Develop non-credit courses connected to gaming or other entertainment industry	Department and Dean	January 2021	Connected to FoA draft Strategic Plan

Unit Update: The spirit of this recommendation is understood by the Program, and the pragmatic aspect of it is welcome, but the program has not had the capacity to implement it since the cyclical review. The already existing Game Design and Development Program at the Brantford campus is likely in a much better position than ML would be to offer non-credit programming in this area—for one thing, they have staff fully housed in their Program. While we recognize the need for and importance of lifelong learning opportunities for alumni and other community members, non-credit programming has not been a priority of the Program, nor of the Faculty of Arts. In the end, we do not believe that the further pursuit of this recommendation would make sense.

Decanal Comments: See below: without further resources the ML Program cannot be reasonably asked to develop non-credit programming.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: The committee appreciates that the development of non-credit programming is not a current priority of the program. Should this change, a conversation with Continuing Education could be helpful in identifying opportunities. No further reporting is required.

Full Recommendation from External Reviewers' Report: Recommendation #16: Examine the possibilities for collaboration with Game Design on the Brantford campus.		
Recommendation to be Implemented (from Final Assessment Report)	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date
#16 Examine possibilities for collaboration with Game Design on Brantford campus	Department and Dean	September 2020

Unit Update: Ongoing, though unlikely to be fulfilled. Discussion of this measure took place at ML steering committee meetings, whereupon the ML Coordinator sent overtures to the Game Design and Development Program at the Brantford campus. The Game Design and Development Program has so far not responded.

Decanal Comments: While we recognize that this is not a high priority and that any collaboration would be labor intensive, we recommend another effort at starting a conversation about the possibilities of collaboration. The Dean of Arts would support further conversation and steps if an initial conversation yielded promising results.

Program Review Sub-Committee Comments: In response to the comments provided by the Dean of Arts, the program is encouraged not to 'close the door' on possible collaborations with the Game Design and Development program at the Brantford campus, even if they have not yet proven productive to date. No further reporting is required.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Unit: Thank you for the opportunity to provide update information on the Medieval and Medievalism Program. I would like to thank Dr. Chris Nighman, Coordinator of Medieval and Medievalism Studies for the last few years, and Dr. David Smith, writer of the 2018-19 Program review document. I would also like to thank Kristine Dyck in particular, the Administrative Assistant for the Program, for all of her hard work over the last academic year--and previously. It has been a challenging time, and Kristine's professionalism and good sense have been one of the key factors in the Program's continuing success.

Dean: The Faculty of Arts is proud of the ML program and grateful for the ongoing work of leading staff and faculty. Thank you for your attention to the Review recommendations. We do acknowledge that the sudden and tragic death of Alicia Mackenzie this Spring will have a substantial impact on the program in the short-term and we support you in your efforts to foster new instructors who will continue her legacy.

Program Review Sub-Committee: The committee appreciates the examples and details provided by the program of how it has worked to implement the recommendations made by the review committee in the 2018-2019 review of the program. It is recognized that the past two academic years, which centred around pandemic response, would not have enabled some of the recommendations made to be prioritized. That said, many of the review committee's recommendations were about maintaining existing practices, which is an indicator of how positively these practices were evaluated by the committee, and the program has provided ample evidence that it

has done so. The committee extends its heartfelt sympathy to the program for the loss of one of its highly valued faculty members during the past year. Based on the comments provided by both the program and the Dean, no further reporting on any of these recommendations is required in advance of the program's next scheduled cyclical review in 2025-2026.

Subsequent Report Required: No