

Academic Program Reviews 2004-2008

Final Program Review Summary Sheets –Faculty of Religious Studies

B.Th. program (*Bachelor of Theology*)

Program Study Group:

Patricia G. Kirkpatrick (Chair)
 Ellen B. Aitken (Dean)
 Douglas Farrow (professor)
 Philip Joudrey (Principal, The United Theological College)
 Torrance Kirby (professor)
 John Simons (Principal, Montreal Diocesan Theological College)
 John Vissers (Principal, The Presbyterian College)
 Maida Vandendorpe (student)

Strengths:

- The B.Th. program is situated within the only Quebec institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.
- Graduates are distinguished by having broad horizons with regard to the study of religion and the historical expressions of Christianity.
- The multicultural and multireligious urban context also provides a rich environment for theological education, which sets this program apart from many others in North America.
- The B.Th. is an intellectually dynamic teaching program; instructors maintain a very high level of teaching, research, and professional activity in their fields.
- The Faculty is recognized as one of the major places for the analytical study of religion in North America.
- There is a strong international character to the program; it is also multidisciplinary at its core.
- The program is enhanced by small-group interaction, with easy access to instructors, most of whom are tenure-track professors in the Faculty.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- Increase teaching resources in Islam, religion in Canada, and interfaith studies.
- Continue attention to issues of pluralism, contextualization, and the study of religions other than Christianity
- Fund international field-based experiences for students and scholarships for students from developing countries.
- Enhance curriculum development and staffing of B.Th. honours seminars
- Manage of student numbers, especially tracking of students not affiliated with the theological colleges, mature students and students who enter the program directly from CEGEP or high schools, with attention to advising needs.
- Track professional outcomes of graduates
- Create a 30-credit certificate in theology

Graduate Programs:

Master of Sacred Theology (STM)

M.A. (Religious Studies) Thesis

M.A. (Religious Studies) Non-Thesis

M.A. (Biomedical Ethics)

Ph.D. (Religious Studies)

Program Study Group:

Victor Hori (Chair)

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Strengths:

- Recognized internationally as providing a vibrant, well-designed graduate education of excellent quality. Inquiry-based learning is integral to all aspects of the program.
- Students are associated with one of four teaching and research areas in the Faculty: Asian Religions; Biblical Studies; Christian Thought and History; and Religion and Culture.
- Graduate student teaching experience.
- All programs in the Faculty of Religious Studies study religion and religions *systematically*, with attention to languages, histories, theologies, and contemporary worldviews among other aspects. The programs also make use of collaborative relations with other academic units; the MA in Biomedical Ethics is a prime example.
- A fundamental strength lies in the insistence that graduate researchers be able to read primary texts in the original classical languages and access the secondary scholarship in modern languages.
- Exposure to research for students via the Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR) which fosters interdisciplinary research both within and outside of McGill.
- The Faculty is presently one of the strongest units teaching Asian religions in North American universities.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Increase funding, including multi-year full-funding packages, for MA and PhD
- Increase faculty numbers with strategic cross-unit and interdisciplinary appointments; enhance existing collaborative supervisory relations.
- Explore the possibility of a joint BA/MA program for the future.
- Add a field-work “stream” to graduate programs, with increased funding available for international research.
- Redesign the “common” MA seminar required of all MA students.
- Develop inter-faculty graduate seminars and colloquia, especially with Islamic Studies and through CREOR.
- Request MELS for reclassification of the STM as a research degree.
- Explore (with Continuing Education) the establishment of a summer program in ancient and scriptural languages at McGill, as well as other means of maintaining a high caliber of language expertise without negative impact on time to completion.

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