

External Unit Review Committee Report, Department of English, UNBC

Review Committee: Dr. Michelle Faubert (Manitoba); Dr. Jason Haslam (Dalhousie); Dr. Jennifer Hyndman (UNBC)

Report authors: Dr. Michelle Faubert (Manitoba) and Dr. Jason Haslam (Dalhousie)

SUMMARY OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF DEGREE PROGRAM(S) PROCESS

Prior to our campus visit (24-25 April) we reviewed the English Department's Self-Study Report, the report of the previous external reviewers (2016), and the departmental and university websites. During our visit we met with the following individuals and constituencies:

- VP Academic and Provost
- Interim VP Research and Innovation
- Dean, Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities
- Chair, Dept. of English
- Full-time faculty members in individual meetings
- Term, Adjunct, or Emeritus Faculty
- Graduate Students and Alumni
- Undergraduate Students
- Administrative staff
- Student advisors
- Representatives of Affiliated Programs (History, Women's and Gender Studies, Environmental and Sustainability Studies)
- Representatives of Regional Campuses
- Librarians

The visit was very informative, and we greatly enjoyed meeting with everyone. Especially helpful (and pleasant) was our opportunity to meet with the External/Internal, Jennifer Hyndman from Mathematics. However, the schedule was very tight and exhausting.

We would like to thank all individuals and groups for meeting with us at such a busy time of term, and for sharing their thoughts on the English Department and its relationships to the Faculty, University, and wider communities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Major Strengths of the Degree Program

The English Department at UNBC is thriving and successful. We are vastly impressed with the period coverage it offers with a faculty contingent of only eight people, as we are with the admirable research profiles of those faculty members. Moreover, it not only attracts many students to its classes, but those students are clearly very satisfied with their education; this point is in evidence in those students who choose to stay for their graduate degrees. We also note that some students go on to enrol in PhD programs in major schools across the country, which is an indication of the strong training they receive in UNBC English classes. The creativity in the program's course descriptions and types of assignments

also demonstrates the instructors' dedication to providing attractive, engaging, and informative education to their students. Nor did the enrollment numbers suffer much during the pandemic, which speaks to the power of these instructors to engage their students in multiple formats. Finally, the English Department as a whole is a great boon to the University: it offers vital writing instruction for students across the faculties at UNBC, and the instructors fulfill service positions at every level of the University.

Significant Areas of Weakness or In Need of Further Development

By the end of our informative visit to UNBC's main campus, we were left with the impression that the English Department is in a period of transition brought on by several factors, such as the move to a five-faculty organization of the University, a new provost and fairly new Dean, a few new hires, the dawning realization that retirements of many faculty members are on the horizon, and a new funding model. So many changes at once can be overwhelming and make people feel like they are constantly reacting, instead of planning ahead and choosing a steady path forward. For this reason, we recommend a departmental retreat in which the English faculty members can discuss the above issues, as well as a few more we will list below.

Comments of the Future Direction of the Degree Program(s)

We believe that the following recommendations can help the English program at UNBC to continue to thrive in its instructional goals. It is a collegial unit with instructors devoted to its success and that of their students. As we address below, the Department is in a transitional period that has created some issues requiring prompt resolution, but this period can lead to a new approach to, for example, first-year programming, faculty renewal, and Chair term-lengths, all of which promise to make this Department stronger than ever.

Summary of the Reviewer's Recommendations

Recommendation #1: We strongly recommend that the department hold a faculty retreat within the next year to discuss undergraduate programming and departmental service structure, as outlined in the subsequent recommendations in the body of this report.

Recommendation #1b: we recommend to the Dean that the current cut to TA/sessional funding be delayed/mitigated for one academic year to allow the department the time to think about options. Likewise, we recommend the Dean provide some small funds for food or other supports for the retreat.

Recommendation #3: We recommend that the department explicitly discuss at its retreat its first-year programming as whole, considering whether each course currently works well as an entry point into its upper-year programming, and whether more consistency to *stated* expectations should be considered.

Recommendation #4: At the retreat, or separately (depending on time), the department should discuss the feasibility of developing an honours degree, while considering workload as a factor (eg. if a capstone is needed, what forms could it take?)

Recommendation #5: That the English department, Regional Campuses, and FISSSH maintain regular contact to discuss needs and resources regarding teaching for these campuses with an eye to increasing opportunities for Regional Campus students to engage with appropriate English offerings.

Recommendation #6: The department should develop collegially a ranked list of desired areas for new hires, paying attention to areas of disciplinary need as well as areas of pedagogical need and growth, and regularly revisit this list (perhaps once a year) as members are hired, retire, and so on.

Recommendation #7: That among the list of desired hires, 1 position in Writing Studies and 1 position hired jointly with Women Studies or another Interdisciplinary Program be prioritized .

Recommendation #8 (for the Dean and Provost): That English be granted one hire in Writing Studies as soon as possible, in part to help the department and university develop strategies for the writing-education challenges that are only increasing.

Recommendation #9 (for the Dean and Provost): That English be granted an additional hire at the Associate level within the next 3 years, with a preference to someone with departmental administrative experience.

Recommendation #10 (for the Dean and Provost): That, enrollments being maintained or grown, the department's retirements all be replaced within the unit.

Recommendation #11: That the department follow the Faculty Agreement's recommended term limits and develop a system of rotation for the position of Department Chair.

Recommendation #12: That the Department formalize inviting Academic Advisors into 100-level classes, discussing this process as part of the retreat discussion of first-year programming.

Recommendation #13: That the senior administration work with relevant groups to develop a dedicated Writing Centre.

Recommendation #14: That the department discuss any variability in TA and RA workload, with an eye to developing policy if needed to regularize that workload; this could also be part of the discussion of the suggested rethinking of 100-level programming.

Recommendation #15: That the department implement formal group training sessions for all TAs (to be supplemented by individual instructors according to their needs).

Recommendation #16: That the department consider instituting a SSHRC MA CGS application workshop, and possibly start creating a database of successful applications, for fourth-year students considering the move into graduate-level work.

Department of English
English (BA Program)
English (MA Program)

Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities

Chair: Dr. Karin Beeler

Dean: Dr. Kriston Rennie

Provost and Vice President, Academic: Dr. Wendy Rodgers

**Date UNBC Received the External Review of Degree Programs Report: May 17,
2023**

**Please Note: The Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s)
Report, Action Plan and the 36 Month Action Plan Progress Report are made
publicly available on the Provost's website.**

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PART 1 – ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT’S RESPONSE TO THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF DEGREE PROGRAM(S) REPORT

(August 15, 2023)

The Academic Unit’s response can be relatively brief.

I. Overall Impression of the Summary of Findings and Recommendations from the External Review of Degree Program Report

The Department agreed with many of the reviewers’ recommendations with some qualifications. **A detailed response to every recommendation is attached.** Most of the department’s responses involve changes that can be implemented as part of the department’s regular business, which would also include updates to course descriptions. However, two key areas have been identified in consultation with Dr. Kriston Rennie (Dean of FISSSH) as priorities. **Item 1** is the urgent hiring of a Writing Studies professor/instructor who would be responsible for restructuring and implementing a new way of delivering ENGL 170 (Writing and Communication Skills) and would explore the future of university writing across various areas at UNBC. **Item 2** involves the re-examination of the first-year curriculum and the identification of pathways (literary studies, film/media studies, and creative writing studies) for the BA program.

II. Correction of Factual Errors or Areas of Misunderstanding in the Report

No errors were found.

PART 2 - ACTION PLAN

What steps does the Academic Administrative Unit intend or propose to take in response to the recommendations from the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report*?

UNBC Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report								
1	Recommendation	That the English Department hire a Writing Studies (tenure-track Assistant professor or continuing senior instructor) with a start date of January 1, 2024) who would be responsible for restructuring and implementing a new way of delivering ENGL 170 (Writing and Communication Skills) by March 2024 and would also explore the future of writing across various areas at UNBC.						
	Action	Advertise a Writing Studies position: Assistant professor level (tenure-track) or continuing Senior Instructor level (depending on teaching workload, administrative and scholarly responsibilities attached to this position).						
	Person(s) Responsible	Chair, Department of English in consultation with Dr. Kriston Rennie (Dean)						
	Target Implementation Date	Ad to be posted in September 2023. Closing date for applications: November 1, 2023. Start date: January 1, 2024.						
	Implementation Details	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">12 month Action Plan Progress Report</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">24 month Action Plan Progress Report</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">36 month Action Plan Progress Report</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	12 month Action Plan Progress Report		24 month Action Plan Progress Report		36 month Action Plan Progress Report	
12 month Action Plan Progress Report								
24 month Action Plan Progress Report								
36 month Action Plan Progress Report								
2	Recommendation	That the English Department re-examine the first-year curriculum and identify clear pathways (e.g. literary studies, film/media/cultural studies, and creative writing studies) for the BA program. Revise course descriptions and think about the curriculum in relation to decolonization and EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion).						

Action	Delete certain first year courses; clarify the key pathways for an English major and revise course descriptions, delete or add courses as required. Revise the BA and MA program calendar sections as required.	
Person(s) Responsible	Chair, Faculty designates (to be determined) as well as the department's Administrative Assistant	
Target Implementation Date	August 31, 2025 for implementation of changes to the major and undergraduate and graduate course descriptions.	
Implementation Details	12 month Action Plan Progress Report	
	24 month Action Plan Progress Report	
	36 month Action Plan Progress Report	

FOLLOW UP DATES

As per the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Procedures*, the Academic Administrative Units are responsible for submitting Action Plan Progress Reports to the Dean on the following dates:

- 12 month Action Plan Progress Report: **August 31, 2024**
- 24 month Action Plan Progress Report: **August 31, 2025**
- 36 month Action Plan Progress Report: **August 31, 2026**

PART 3 – DEAN’S AND PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC’S RESPONSES

I. Summary of the Degree Program Review Process

The external reviewers for the English program, Professors Michelle Faubert (University of Manitoba) and Jason Haslam (Dalhousie University), conducted their formal review at UNBC on April 24-25 2023. Having been provided in advance with the program’s self-study and supporting documentation, the reviewers met over the course of two days with the Provost, myself as the Dean of the Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities, the English Program Chair (Dr. Karin Beeler), the VP Research, the program’s contributing faculty and committee members, the program’s administrative support staff, some former students, and a few others. The entire review process sought to gather additional context and details around the academic program, its history and development, obtain a clear understanding of its current status and operations, and a thorough appraisal of its structure. Upon completion of the interview process, the reviewers submitted their executive summary to the Provost’s Office on May 17, 2023. After consultation with the English Program members, the Chair submitted her program’s response and action plan to the Dean and Provost on August 18, 2023.

II. Dean’s Response to the Recommendations and Action Plan

(Date of the Response: September 11, 2023)

Utilizing UNBC’s provided template, the external reviewers issued a total of 16 recommendations for the English Program, which I have distilled into five thematic areas:

1. Curriculum organization and renewal, especially at the first-year level;
2. Strategic faculty hiring;
3. A reconsidered delivery model for ENGL 170, tied to creating a Writing Centre at UNBC;
4. Funding/resource recommendations for the Program, Dean and Provost; and
5. Support, leadership, and long-term program planning.

The above (and attached) recommendations aim to provide stability and capacity for the English Program, which has long served a pivotal function across the institution, particularly through its curriculum and supervision expertise. As the reviewers noted, the program’s strength lies in its interdisciplinary and collaborative nature, and its relevance to UNBC’s strategic and academic planning goals and priorities.

While the response and proposed action plan focuses on two key action items (outlined in more detail below), it is important to note the steps already taken within the Program as a result of the external review. As the reviewers recommended, a retreat has already been held (August 14) with all program members to enable discussions on first-year curriculum, the possibility of developing an honours degree, the needs and resources for delivery of courses to other campuses, Chair leadership strategy, departmental service structure, among a few other pertinent matters addressed in a number of the reviewers’ recommendations. The conversation around developing an institution-wide Writing Centre is tied to one of the action items, though it requires greater institutional input and planning. Similarly, regional

programming (recommendation #5) is an ongoing and strategic discussion at the Chairs and Faculty level, informing our teaching plans going forward.

RECOMMENDATION #1: *That the English Department hire a Writing Studies (tenure-track Assistant professor or continuing senior instructor) with a start date of January 1, 2024) who would be responsible for restructuring and implementing a new way of delivering ENGL 170 (Writing and Communication Skills) by March 2024 and would also explore the future of writing across various areas at UNBC.*

ACTION #1: I agree and support this recommendation as a priority for the program and the wider university community. Namely, I consider it time-critical to recruit a dedicated and continuing position (tenure-track or Senior Instructor) that would facilitate the implementation of a new ENGL 170 model, in turn benefiting a number of programs and students across UNBC. As the reviewers emphasized in their report, ‘the University must have a plan to teach writing to all of their students, as it is a basic skill that should be a part of every undergraduate program’ (p. 8).

In sum, hiring this dedicated position would help ensure the continued and sustainable offering of ENGL 170 across the institution, in concert with planning for the 2024/25 academic year.

To build on the program’s burgeoning discussions on this subject, I agree with the reviewers’ recommendations to restructure ENGL 170 in a different fashion, as a larger lecture-plus-tutorial course, or possibly as a lecture course to be taught 1.5 hours per week by a new (continuing) instructor, with several tutorials each semester. One cannot be done without the other.

As part of the review and this particular recommendation, I recommend that the Chair and program decide on the preferred instructional model and needs for ENGL 170 in order to guide the faculty hiring process, as well as strategic curriculum and financial planning. It is my recommendation that the subject’s organisational and delivery model be established securely within the program before any hiring process be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION #2: *We recommend that the department explicitly discuss at its retreat its first-year programming as whole, considering whether each course currently works well as an entry point into its upper-year programming, and whether more consistency to stated expectations should be considered.*

ACTION #2: I endorse this recommendation. In particular, that the English Department re-examine its first-year curriculum and identify clear pathways (e.g., literary studies, film/media/cultural studies, and creative writing studies) for the BA program. The proposed course of action will include: deleting certain first year courses; clarifying the key pathways for an English major; revising course descriptions; revising the BA and MA program calendar sections as required; and, revising course descriptions and thinking about the curriculum in relation to decolonization and EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion). While discussions on this recommendation have already begun, implementation will take shape in the first 12 months, with a view to launching the new model for the 24/25 academic year. The following year would ideally see a revision of the English major with key pathways/courses for different streams, taking into consideration future faculty retirements, future hiring, and any modifications to the proposed strategic plan.

III. Provost and Vice President, Academic's Response to the Recommendations and Action Plan

(October 4th, 2023)

Thank you to the reviewers, the department, and the dean for their participation in this important activity ensuring the existing and future high quality of programs in the English Department. I have noted and support compliments to the department on its achievements, individually and organizationally. I want to emphasize the important role the department plays to the institution. Such a large institutional role must be recognized and duly supported. The need for the department to consider pan-institutional needs as well as local focused needs is important. I am noting points around predictable and sustainable funding.

I have carefully read the reviewers' report, the departmental response, and the decanal response. I want to underscore the authority and responsibility of the dean and department for a large majority of the recommendations. I broadly agree with the recommendations and note the department has moved quickly to begin discussions in two retreat settings and to work with the dean. I am noting compliments to both the department and dean for their dedication to a collegial and collaborative environment.

As is usually the case, the external committee has made recommendations that have resource implications, in this case enduring resource implications, such as creating new positions in the unit, and creating an institution-wide writing centre/support. Whereas I again broadly support suggestions for growth, recommendations that require acquiring new resources or reallocation of resources will take some time to achieve. I note the need for long term planning of the faculty complement that aligns with the strategic direction and goals of the department. I also note the observations in the on-going work to support a budget model refinement that appropriately supports activities supporting programs outside the focal unit.

I want to point to several recommendations that align well with institutional initiatives including and not limited to:

- Curriculum review – with an eye to ensuring a positive student experience and reasonable workloads for faculty and instructors
- Creative course and program delivery models that improve effectiveness and reach with limited resource implications; managing effective delivery of large enrolment classes
- Stronger connections with campus in Fort St. John, Terrace, and Quesnel and with Indigenous communities
- Increased external and international partnerships, especially that result in collaborative funding and related outputs, and opportunities for learners of all levels
- Growing competitive research funding
- Enhanced internal (and external) communications
- Reducing burdensome administrative structures and processes – and enhancing supports and training for those in administrative positions
- Enhancing graduate student training for teaching and scholarship and grant applications
- Exploring enriched supports for international students

Related institutional initiatives that are still in development that will align with the recommendations and responses include the selection and placement of a Vice Provost Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies, and a continuing Director of CTLT. These offices can be involved in and take institutional leadership over supporting graduate students in writing and applications for example, and in developing pan-institutional writing strategies or supports, respectively.

I look forward to seeing the Department's continued work on refining its strategic goals and direction. I applaud early efforts to engage in retreats and discussions that will yield the goals and the pathways to achieve them.

Overall Impression of the Summary of Findings and Recommendations from the External Review of Degree Program Report (DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)

The Department of English met on June 26, 2023 to discuss many of the recommendations in the external reviewers' Degree Program Report. Further discussions will occur via email and during a half-day retreat in August. We appreciate the efforts of Dr. Michelle Faubert (University of Manitoba), Dr. Jason Haslam (Dalhousie University) and Dr. Jennifer Hyndman (UNBC) who met with faculty, students, staff and administrators during two days of meetings.

We want to acknowledge the reviewers' appreciation for the Department of English as a "thriving, motivated scholarly community at every level" (19) and their comment that the department is "a great boon to the University" since "it offers vital writing instruction for students across the faculties at UNBC" (2). They took note of the fact that "instructors fulfill service positions at every level of the University" (2). Their recommendations reflect their careful consideration of departmental strengths and challenges.

Below are the responses of the English department to the reviewers' recommendations (in italics). Some of these recommendations will also require responses from Dr. Kriston Rennie, Dean of FISSSH, and in some cases, the Provost (Dr. Wendy Rodgers); we invite them to add their comments in order to assist in the development and implementation of our recommendations.

Recommendation #1: *We strongly recommend that the department hold a faculty retreat within the next year to discuss undergraduate programming and departmental service structure, as outlined in the subsequent recommendations in the body of this report.*

The department had a meeting on June 26 to discuss most of these recommendations. Our half day retreat on August 14 from 10-2 pm will allow us to formulate more concrete plans with respect to curriculum development and the action plans for other recommendations.

Recommendation #1b: *we recommend to the Dean that the current cut to TA/sessional funding be delayed/mitigated for one academic year to allow the department the time to think about options. Likewise, we recommend the Dean provide some small funds for food or other supports for the retreat.*

The department felt very strongly that the reduction in the TA budget will present challenges for our first year instructors charged with teaching a large number of students. At the time of this writing, ENGL 100 (Fall 2023) is full with 90 students with a waitlist, and ENGL 104 is almost at capacity with 82 students. *These numbers exceed numbers for first year courses offered by every other FISSSH department except for First Nations Studies (FNST 100).* Additional funds for both of these Fall courses are essential given the amount we received for our previous TA allocations (we request 2 positions X 160 hours each for ENGL 100 (instead of the current allocation of 1 position at 160 hours), and we would ask for the same consideration (or something very close) for ENGL 104, especially since our incoming instructor for ENGL 100 is

a recent Ph.D who will be teaching a large class like this for the first time. There is also the matter of dealing with the additional workload involved in managing assignments that may involve academic misconduct (plagiarism and unauthorized ChatGPT/AI use). Our instructor for ENGL 104 will also be handling a larger class for the first time and will potentially have to deal with an increase in academic misconduct cases as a result of AI use for assignments. Furthermore, both instructors will need to train their TAs how to identify and respond to these matters as well. This will require assigning TA hours beyond the previous number of hours allocated for class preparation and grading.

In terms of hiring for ENGL 170, there was considerable surprise among the university community that we were not permitted to offer ENGL 170 over the spring or summer. This course always generates full classes, and students (including international students who are very interested in taking the course or repeating the course during intersession) were not well served by this curtailment.

The department agrees with the reviewers' recommendation that the Dean "*provide some small funds for food or other supports for the retreat.*"

Recommendation #2 (missing in the reviewers' summary of recommendations)

That the department consider, at its retreat, restructuring English 170 as a larger lecture-plus-tutorial course. Items to consider would be: what size is functional for the lecture (we suggest 60 as a functional model); what the budgetary/programming implications would be (could a larger portion of 170 be taught by full-time members under this model without affecting majors programming?); and what formal TA training could be implemented (as part of their program's professional training and as part of their contracted hours)

The department still favours the continuation of the current model for delivering ENGL 170 because the standard for delivering writing courses in classes across Canada consists of sections with a cap of 20-25. At 30 students per section, our class sizes already exceed best-practice recommendations. We discussed the reviewers' recommendation that we restructure ENGL 170 as a lecture course to be taught 1.5 hours per week by a new (continuing) instructor; we suggest lectures of 60 students each semester (as recommended by the reviewers) with several tutorials each semester (30 students per tutorial.) If a sessional teaches the tutorials, each tutorial would be 1.5 SCH or 1.5 hours per week) per semester covered. The department does not support hiring TAs for this model since most do not have the necessary skills or experience and there are workload/hour limitations for TAs.

One question that was raised was whether ENGL 170 would have to be offered exclusively in person unlike the existing model which allows for greater flexibility for in person and online instruction. Spring or summer delivery of ENGL 170 could still continue via the cost recovery mode with the 30 person limit unless a different model is developed for intersession courses.

The 2024/2025 format for ENGL 170 needs to be decided by the end of December 2023, along with the urgent hire of a writing studies faculty member/coordinator in order to facilitate course

scheduling in February 2024. If none of the above recommendations are accompanied by a budget for a widescale delivery of ENGL 170, then the department will consider offering ENGL 170 as a signature course for English majors only.

Recommendation #3: *We recommend that the department explicitly discuss at its retreat its first-year programming as whole, considering whether each course currently works well as an entry point into its upper-year programming, and whether more consistency to stated expectations should be considered.*

Curriculum changes will be discussed further at our August retreat. Initial thoughts included the proposed deletion of ENGL 102 (Poetry) and ENGL 103 (Fiction) since they have not been offered regularly. We have a fiction course at the second year level, and poetry is offered in other first year and second year courses. ENGL 100 (Introduction to Literary Structures) primarily fulfills the literature stream for majors and interested non-majors, and ENGL 104 (Introduction to Film) reflects current popular and academic interest in visual media. ENGL 120 (Indigenous Literature) was added as one way to access the English major and as a way to decolonize the English major. Retaining it as a first year course increases the visibility of Indigenous literature for first year students and reflects the department's interest in fostering reconciliation efforts. Faculty agreed that ENGL 170 should be part of the curriculum, subject to adequate funding, but it should not be used as a first year course to enter the rest of the English major.

We discussed highlighting different streams. Theory courses could be included in the literature and film pathways.

1. Literature stream ENGL 100, 211, 212, literary period, special topics courses
2. Creative writing/writing stream? 100/120/170, 271, 470, 471, plus literature requirements
3. Film/TV/ Cultural Studies stream? 104, 209, 309, 409, plus literature requirements

We will discuss this further at August retreat.

Recommendation #4: *At the retreat, or separately (depending on time), the department should discuss the feasibility of developing an honours degree, while considering workload as a factor (eg. if a capstone is needed, what forms could it take?)*

Faculty briefly discussed the feasibility of offering an honours degree and whether we have the capacity to offer an honours degree when we also have increasing demand to deliver a graduate program. This would depend on how an honours degree is structured. More faculty appeared to be in favour of an honours degree without a capstone course/essay/project. Entry into the honours program would require a high GPA (to be determined). Faculty had more concerns about supporting an honours degree with a capstone project (essay or creative project), but if the annual numbers of students completing the capstone course remained small, it might be feasible. We need to look at other honours programs at UNBC and elsewhere.

Vancouver Island University has the following model with a capstone course:

VIU: Students must also fulfill all [1st and 2nd year requirements of the B.A. Major in English](#), and the courses listed below:

Years 3 and 4

Forty-two credits of English courses numbered [300](#) or above, including:

Example of a capstone from VIU

ENGL 490 (3) Capstone Project

An extended written project developed in consultation with a supervisor. The project may take the form of a traditional essay; however, it may also take a non-traditional form, such as a digital blog or multi-media portfolio. For information, consult the English Department Chair. (3:0:0)

<https://www.viu.ca/programs/arts-humanities-social-sciences/english-ba>

Recommendation #5: *That the English department, Regional Campuses, and FISSSH maintain regular contact to discuss needs and resources regarding teaching for these campuses with an eye to increasing opportunities for Regional Campus students to engage with appropriate English offerings.*

Many English courses are offered online and therefore offer opportunities for regional students to take our courses. We may wish to explore whether we should develop ENGL 211, 212 and perhaps ENGL 300 as online courses for regional delivery to allow students to complete these degree requirements and their degree exclusively online. What are the current budgets for regional delivery if that includes any in person component? The WWNI is offering more English courses perhaps because of recently approved degree programs. How should the English department be involved in planning? What input should the Dean have? Should different sections of online courses in various regions be offered in the same semester under the same number? Do non- WWNI students always have access to WWNI courses? Most of the English department's contact outside of Prince George has involved conversations with the Northwest region's liaison, Melinda Bahr and with Dr. Deanna Nyce. It isn't entirely clear what Bruce Denis' role is in terms of regional operations since he has not been part of academic discussions. We need more information about the availability of a regional budget and regional needs in order to offer courses, including the proposed 2024 Haida Gwaii summer program.

Recommendation #6: *The department should develop collegially a ranked list of desired areas for new hires, paying attention to areas of disciplinary need as well as areas of pedagogical need and growth, and regularly revisit this list (perhaps once a year) as members are hired, retire, and so on.*

As the reviewers indicate, faculty retirements over the next few years mean that there is “pressing importance” for “at least one new hire in the next 2-3 years, preferably at the junior Associate level” and a plan to hire into the future (including someone in the field of Writing Studies or Composition) to help with the “potential reformation and teaching of ENGL 170” (12).

Department members noted that we have lost capacity for film/tv studies, and fantastic literature/science fiction with Dr. Stan Beeler’s retirement. We have also lost Creative writing expertise and American literature expertise with Dee Horne’s retirement, although Kristen Guest has offered to teach American literature. Across English departments in Canada, Creative Writing courses are attracting students and growing in popularity so this area should be given serious consideration.

Future hiring priorities:

1. Writing position at Associate or Entry level
2. Film studies at Associate level perhaps with another area like Women’s Studies/Gender Studies?
or
Creative Writing
Or Medievalist

Recommendation #7: *That among the list of desired hires, 1 position in Writing Studies and 1 position hired jointly with Women Studies or another Interdisciplinary Program be prioritized.*

We believe that retirements over the next few years will require up to 3 new positions, and the department will discuss how to prioritize these at our August retreat.

Recommendation #8 *(for the Dean and Provost): That English be granted one hire in Writing Studies as soon as possible, in part to help the department and university develop strategies for the writing education challenges that are only increasing.*

As the reviewers emphasize in their report, “the University must have a plan to teach writing to all of their students, as it is a basic skill that should be a part of every undergraduate program” (8). There is urgency associated with this because the current budget for ENGL 170 ends with the Winter 2024 semester (April 30). The sooner the individual is hired, the sooner planning for the ongoing delivery of writing courses at UNBC and any modifications can begin. The first steps for the 2024/25 format and delivery for ENGL 170 need to be discussed by end of September, and if a Writing Studies faculty member is hired by December 2023, they could contribute to further planning of workload assignments and course scheduling in February 2024.

This position could be a tenure-track position or a teaching only, senior continuing instructor position. The department’s preference is for a continuation of the current model for ENGL 170 (with 30 students per section) but we have been discussing the possibility of restructuring ENGL

170 as a lecture course to be taught by this new hire with tutorials staffed by sessionals? Or TAs) if no funding available for the existing model.

Recommendation #9 (for the Dean and Provost): *That English be granted an additional hire at the Associate level within the next 3 years, with a preference to someone with departmental administrative experience.*

(see recommendations 6-8) Hiring someone at the Associate level with administrative experience would bring in someone who could take on leadership roles in the department and the university as a whole, since faculty at the full professor level will retire over the next few years.

Recommendation #10 (for the Dean and Provost): *That, enrollments being maintained or grown, the department's retirements all be replaced within the unit.*

The department fully supports this recommendation but may be interested in exploring a joint appointment for one of its hires with another department (e.g. Women's Studies/Gender Studies?) It wasn't clear to the department whether a joint hire would be in addition to future retirement replacements.

Recommendation #11: *That the department follow the Faculty Agreement's recommended term limits and develop a system of rotation for the position of Department Chair.*

Faculty are supportive of rotating the Chair's position. Several faculty expressed a willingness to serve as Chair in some capacity. If an acting Chair is required for a transitional period, one model could involve having co-Chairs serve in the role. There was a precedent for co-Chairs in the School of Education.

Recommendation #12: *That the Department formalize inviting Academic Advisors into 100-level classes, discussing this process as part of the retreat discussion of first-year programming.*

Faculty supported inviting Academic Advisors into 100 level courses. This could occur a few weeks into the beginning of each term for both in person and online courses.

Recommendation #13: *That the senior administration work with relevant groups to develop a dedicated Writing Centre.*

The English department is interested in investigating the merits of a Writing Centre and the department's role in the centre. There is a preference for continuing to offer ENGL 170 as an English course, but there are certainly some advantages involved in building infrastructure for a Writing Centre that serves a range of university writing needs whether these are part of a course or other kinds of tutoring (employment for students, TAs? Sessionals; services for international and Indigenous students). Examining existing Writing Centres and their components would be a useful start. The English department would need to know how we would be involved in this centre. It is important that the Writing Centre be a part of the English Department; writing is an academic discipline and would need the department to guide its mandates, scholarship, and learning outcomes.

Recommendation #14: *That the department discuss any variability in TA and RA workload, with an eye to developing policy if needed to regularize that workload; this could also be part of the discussion of the suggested rethinking of 100-level programming.*

Every TA position will have some variation in workload. The total number of hours for TA contracts often differ depending on the course enrolment. There appears to be some variation in faculty expectations for attendance requirements, which may not leave enough time for TAs to mark assignments. The TA workload document lists the number of hours assigned to various tasks and faculty members have some discretion in terms of how they allocate these hours. RA workload can also vary depending on the funds a faculty member has available. In general we do not recommend students take on more than 10-12 hours of work per week but some students choose to accept more than one contract per semester. We have discussed a lecture and tutorial model but if TAs are busy teaching tutorials, there will be significantly less time for them to grade assignments, and now with concerns regarding AI/ChatGPT, they require even more time for the grading portion of their assistantship.

Recommendation #15: *That the department implement formal group training sessions for all TAs (to be supplemented by individual instructors according to their needs).*

We need to discuss this further at the August retreat. If the department agrees that “formal group training” by the department should be mandatory, it would likely have to be part of the TA contracts. It is difficult to “supplement” training once hours have been listed in the TA workload agreement at the beginning of the semester. Asking students to voluntarily attend extra workshops could be problematic, however. Fewer hours would likely be allocated for marking if we require attendance at every class in addition to TA workshops offered by English department instructors. One way around this is to make the case for extra TA hours for each contract to accommodate a training session at the beginning of the semester and perhaps a midsemester training session as well.

Recommendation #16: *That the department consider instituting a SSHRC MA CGS application workshop, and possibly start creating a database of successful applications, for fourth-year students considering the move into graduate-level work*

This should be part of the responsibilities of the English department’s grad advisor or other faculty working with the advisor (or we thought it could be part of the work of the FISSSH research committee chair). The FISSSH research committee recently attempted to create a FISSSH-wide repository for successful SSHRC applications (which both graduate students and professors would be able to consult), but the initiative was abandoned at the request of members of the FISSSH Chairs’ Council. In his role as Chair of the FISSSH research committee, Dr. Hutchings provided the following summary of the initiative in his November 2022 report to the FISSSH Council:

“Grant Writing and Scholarship Writing Digital Library Initiative: After announcing this initiative and seeking feedback at the 6 September meeting of the FISSSH Council, Kevin discussed best practices for data storage with Susie Wilson (UNBC’s Data Services Librarian) and Sharleen Balogh (Office of Research and Innovation), He also corresponded with UNBC’s

Metadata Librarian Geoffrey Boyd, who advised him on the creation of a “sharing agreement” that previously successful grant and scholarship proposal writers would be asked to sign upon donating proposals to the library. Kevin subsequently created a draft sharing agreement document, which committee members edited at our November 1st meeting. The resultant document was considered by Dean Rennie and members of the FISSSH Chairs Council at their meeting of 3 November. The Dean and Chairs subsequently advised the Research Committee that the Office of Research and Innovation, not the FISSSH Research Committee, would be best equipped to create such a repository, so the Research Committee has now dropped this initiative.”

Another option would be to simply ask successful students directly if they are willing to share their successful applications with others.

Correction of Factual Errors or Areas of Misunderstanding in the Report

One question that the department raised in relation to the reviewers’ terminology included the reference to the “departmental service structure” (2). Faculty wondered whether reviewers were referring primarily to service in terms of service teaching -- the delivery of ENGL 170 and other first year courses taken by non-majors -- or whether the reviewers were also thinking of departmental service in the form of university and professional leadership positions and committee membership. Based on their recommendations, all of these areas could certainly be considered part of a “departmental service structure.” Some clarification from the reviewers would be helpful if they are permitted to respond.