Cyclical Review

Final Assessment Report and Executive Summary

Cyclical Review of the Graduate Program in Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University

Degree(s):

Master of Art in Conflict Studies

Submitted to:

Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

June 8, 2016

--

Senate of the University of Ottawa

November 28, 2016
Executive Summary
Graduate Program in Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University
Cyclical Review Year: 2015-2016
Prepared by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Meeting of June 8, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of program reviewed</th>
<th>Conflict Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Master of Art in Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible academic unit</td>
<td>School of Conflict Studies, University Saint Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final assessment</td>
<td>Good quality, with report to be submitted in June 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Strengths
The reviewers highlighted a number of the program’s strengths, including a diverse student body, the multidisciplinary nature of the program, a personalized environment, curriculum that is both broad and encompassing in comparison to similar programs at other universities and the good reputation the program enjoys.

The content of the Master’s in Conflict Studies is original and quite unique. The vast majority of conflict studies programs focus on the violent aspects of conflict and conflict among states—often from a political science perspective. The program at Saint Paul University has found not just one but three niches, which are worth mentioning—a multidisciplinary approach, the study of intrastate conflict and the study of the ethnic and identity-related dimensions of such conflicts. This combination is the major strength of the program.

In addition, most courses are given by regular professors of the conflict studies program, which is a considerable advantage for students. The academic credentials of new professors hired in recent years and the excellent research they have published will make it possible for the conflict studies program to continue growing and maintain its strong reputation over the coming years.

Areas for Improvement
Despite the clear strengths of the master’s program, reviewers made a number of recommendations in order to improve the program. The program structure is rigid and leaves little room for flexibility or course selection by students, which does make it impossible for them to specialize in a particular area. In addition, students mentioned a number of overlaps between courses. Reviewers noted there are a high number of mandatory courses, resulting in few electives being offered.

Reviewers also noted that few students choose the MA with thesis option and that the two options (thesis or research paper) are not seen on equal ground. The program also seems to be lacking in terms of developing a culture of research among students. For example, the School has a centre dedicated to conflict studies, which is a platform for meeting and intellectual exchanges. However, students seem to play only a passive role and access is restricted to teaching staff only.

This program generally receives many applications for admission, and students admitted to the program
have diverse backgrounds and come from a variety of settings. However, there are very few francophones students in the program. This master’s program boasts three niche areas that should be more widely promoted: a multidisciplinary approach, the study of intrastate conflict and the study of the ethnic and identity-related dimensions of such conflicts.

Some students mentioned experiencing difficulty once they begin looking for employment. By more clearly defining the program objectives and—more importantly—the cross-curricular competencies students will gain during their studies (in each course, for example) would help them position themselves in the job market and secure job interviews.

Recommendations

1. Seek to reduce content overlap and increase flexibility by reducing the number of required courses and allowing more electives. This should be done while ensuring program objectives remain clearly defined and learning outcomes (including transversal skills) are appropriately covered.

2. Actively strengthen the research culture within and around the program.

3. Publicize the strengths of the program more actively and widely, especially to francophone audiences, and explore ways of making the program more readily available.

Implementation Plan

Calendar and deadlines

All recommendations must be addressed in a report to be submitted on June 30, 2018. The next cyclical evaluation will be completed within seven years and no later than the 2022-2023 academic year.

Responsibility

The dean and vice-dean of graduate programs at Saint Paul University’s Faculty of Human Sciences and the director of the School of Conflict Studies are responsible for implementing the recommendations and monitoring implementation.

Implementation and Reporting Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 1</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Completion deadline</th>
<th>Report deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Seek to reduce content overlap and increase flexibility by reducing the number of required courses and allowing more electives. This should be done while ensuring program objectives remain clearly defined and learning outcomes (including transversal skills) are appropriately covered. | • Program director  
• Program committee | Within 1 year | June 30, 2018 |

Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 2</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Completion deadline</th>
<th>Report deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Actively strengthen the research culture within and around the program. | • Program director  
• Program | Within 1 year | June 30, 2018 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Professors teaching program courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments**
- All members of the School should be involved in strengthening the research culture.
- The program director should seek the support of the dean and vice-dean (Graduate Studies) to attain this objective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 3</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Completion deadline</th>
<th>Report deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Publicize the strengths of the program more actively and widely, especially to francophone audiences, and explore ways of making the program more readily available. | • Program director  
• Program committee | Within 2 years | June 30, 2018 |

**Comments**
- A possibility could be to explore offering more online courses.