

Final Assessment Report for the 2021-2022 Master of Arts in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory (CAST) Program

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the Master of Arts in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory (CAST) program, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the programs' response, and the relevant decanal responses. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Vice-Provost: Teaching and Learning and the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Senate Academic Planning Committee will also approve the Implementation Report.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

The CAST program's last cyclical program review took place during the 2014-2015 review cycle.

The Self-Study was authored by the CAST Graduate Program Coordinator, Penelope Ironstone. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the program also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on October 20, 2021, and a virtual external review took place during April 11-14, 2022.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Alex Latta** from the Department of Global Studies at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Susanne Luhmann** from the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Alberta, and **Dr. Sara Ramshaw** from the Faculty of Law, Cultural, Social, and Political Thought at the University of Victoria. During the external review, the committee had virtual meetings with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Anthony Vannelli, Provost and Vice-President: Academic and Dr. Mary Wilson, Vice-Provost: Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Sofie Lachapelle, Dean of the Faculty of Arts
- Dr. Douglas Deutschman, Associate Vice-President and Dean: Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Penelope Ironstone, Graduate Program Coordinator (opening and closing meetings)
- Ms. Faith McCord, Senior Administrative Assistant
- Full-time faculty in the CAST program
- Graduate students in the CAST program
- Ms. Charlotte Innerd, Head of Collections and Acquisitions, and Ms. Joanne Oud, Liaison Librarian
- Ms. Sally Heath, Manager: Academic Program Development and Review and Ms. Jessica Blondin, Executive Assistant

The review committee submitted their completed report on May 24, 2022. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

External Reviewers' Report Executive Summary

Interdisciplinary knowledge and analysis are vital for understanding and addressing the large-scale problems we are facing locally, nationally, and globally, be this the climate catastrophe, mass violence, war, attacks on democracy, social inequality and precarity, the global refugee crisis, anti-Black racism, the ongoing effects of settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, to name a few. No single academic discipline alone can address these nor track and analyse the manifold cultural, social, and political settings in which these crises play out and are culturally and politically engaged and responded to.

The CAST program does vital work in training students in the interdisciplinary theoretical and cultural analysis of these and other complex and shifting global issues, and their relationship to social and cultural justice. As one of the most highly interdisciplinary graduate programs at Laurier, especially notable for its integration of social science and humanities' intellectual traditions, the program also plays an important role for modelling

interdisciplinary (as opposed to multidisciplinary) program delivery. This includes interdisciplinary program and curriculum design as well as pedagogies for students who join the program with a wide range of academic backgrounds, interests, and future career plans. The CAST program, furthermore, is a showcase for the complexities involved in administering an interdisciplinary program in a largely disciplinary organized institution – under the constraints of diminishing resources.

The comprehensive self-study of the program, together with our conversations with the many different stakeholders, demonstrate that this unique program is successful in sustaining the collaborative delivery of an academically rigorous, pedagogically thoughtful, and academically successful graduate experience. And the program does so with very few resources. From our conversations we learned that the program is well-respected by academic senior leadership, cherished by its alumni and students alike, with faculty deeply committed to the success of the program and its students. A “labor of love” is how the program was described to us on many occasions. While such commitment is admirable, the lack of tangible institutional structures to support the program sufficiently, for example through faculty workload assigned to the program, raises serious risks for its long-term sustainability. Workload issues might well impede the program’s ability to recruit new and more diverse participating faculty (junior faculty, faculty from historically underrepresented groups), which might become urgent in light of future retirements. Such impediments in turn have consequences for the curriculum diversification and for attracting a more diverse cohort of students, all of which the program is highly committed to.

In our observations and our recommendations below we describe the specific conditions, as well as possible solutions, in more detail.

Overall, we are impressed by the program’s quality, innovativeness, faculty commitment and excellence, and student success; we recognize the tremendous value CAST adds to Laurier.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers’ Report included 28 recommendations. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program’s response, and the decanal responses.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Recommendation #1: Continue emphasizing the importance of its interdisciplinary approach to the university’s goals of advancing academic excellence and equipping students with “future readiness” in the face of complex societal challenges.

Unit Response: The CAST program is founded and continues to hinge on a dedication to interdisciplinarity as vital to addressing the complex societal challenges we face. We are committed to advancing academic excellence throughout all aspects of our curriculum and will continue to emphasize the need to equip students with the tools to be “future ready.” This is central to our identity as a graduate program, and we are very pleased that identity was clear to our reviewers.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts recognizes the value of interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge even as our institutional structures continue to reinforce the long-dominant framework built around the time-honoured disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

FGPS Decanal Response: In Laurier’s new draft Strategic Academic Plan, an objective includes to offer “interdisciplinary multi-campus graduate programs”. Although CAST is not formally multi-campus, it does draw on faculty expertise at both campuses and emphasis on interdisciplinary is clearly aligned with this objective and I would advocate for administrative barriers to be overcome to fulfill this objective.

Recommendation #2: Reflect further on the place and shape of experiential learning in its theory-focused program objectives (see Curriculum recommendations for some specific ideas).

Unit Response: We will continue to reflect on the place of experiential learning in the CAST program. While we have had discussions in the Committee of the Whole (CoW) about experiential learning in recent years, most specifically consideration of Community Service-Learning (CSL) or a Co-op Option, we are aware that further discussion is needed, particularly in the context of broader university imperatives and research on the pedagogical advantages of such approaches. We look forward to exploring the Curriculum Recommendations (addressed below) and their specific ideas, as well as providing the unit and its individual instructors the tools to consider how these might apply to our goals. As the reviewers point out, one consideration must be workload, particularly given program structure and staffing, and the realities of workload tied to experiential learning, as is indicated in Recommendation #6 below.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports ongoing conversations about how best to incorporate experiential learning into academic programs. A theory-based program such as CAST may find this particularly challenging but there is still value in exploring the possibilities.

FGPS Decanal Response: While recognizing workload demands, I would encourage the program to continue to explore all opportunities to incorporate experiential learning, including CSL and Co-op options. I suspect that these would be of much interest to students, as an opportunity to gain professional experience and build their resumé. A survey of current students would be useful to gauge interest. FGPS is available for consultation regarding program modification.

Recommendation #3: To ensure the success and long-term viability of programs like CAST, we encourage the university administration to recognize that interdisciplinarity is not merely a pedagogical issue but also an administrative one, and therefore to actively elevate and support it. This could mean its inclusion in future academic strategies, but also requires measures to operationalize, incentivize and reward efforts to cultivate interdisciplinarity.

Unit Response: The CAST program agrees that specific challenges of an interdisciplinary program must be addressed and revisited on an ongoing basis. We will be pleased to continue discussions with university administration regarding the work of interdisciplinarity, its benefits, and how it might effectively be supported and elevated, not only in the CAST program as a “model of interdisciplinarity” but also elsewhere.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts will encourage the Office of the Vice-President Academic to incorporate interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge in the Academic Plan currently being developed.

FGPS Decanal Response: See response above to Recommendation #1.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation #4: Reflect on the role of admission requirements in light of current and future challenges of approaching university education in a more inclusive manner that embraces more diverse and inclusive ways of knowing.

Unit Response: While the CAST program regularly employs the alternate admission recommendations in admission decisions to permit more inclusive admission practices and encourage a diverse student body in our program, both in background training and ways of knowing, this practice has not been formalized nor is it advertised to prospective CAST students. Each Admissions Committee is tasked with determining overall fit for the program and the grounds for an alternate admission recommendation when the application warrants. Conversation with FGPS regarding more inclusive admissions criteria and how we might formalize them will help us to understand the larger policy implications of this recommendation and how it might be implemented. Further, it will also be imperative for the CoW to consider whether our current admissions requirements (B+ in the last 5.0 credits of study) are working to help us accomplish our goals as an academic unit and community as we work toward greater inclusion and diversity. These two pieces – consideration of FGPS policies and alternate admissions criteria and CAST’s own admission requirements – need to be considered in tandem. The CAST Director will initiate discussion with FGPS in 2022-3 in order to assess current policies and admissions requirements in order to develop an appropriate response to this recommendation. This will support deliberation by the CAST CoW where any decision regarding admissions policies are made.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports the CAST program’s approach to admissions. Given the small nature of the program, certainly the addition of more students capable of thriving in the program is important.

FGPS Decanal Response: FGPS welcomes discussions on how we can collectively improve more inclusive admission practices. I agree that the alternate admission recommendation form can be used as an effective tool for this purpose. While not formalized or advertised, perhaps communication of this pathway during early communications with prospective students could be considered to further enhance this practice.

CURRICULUM

Recommendation #5: Create transparency for applying and incoming students about the breadth of (elective) courses offered in each field and clarify on the webpage which courses/electives will be offered in any given academic year to avoid expectations that cannot be met by the program within its resource limitations.

Unit Response: The problem of limited course offerings and student expectation of a greater number of courses on offer in any given year is not unique to the CAST MA program. We will continue to work to communicate our course offerings to prospective applicants more clearly. The CAST program has recently worked with Jessica Hunt, the communication specialist for FGPS, on the landing webpage for the CAST program to hone the language to ensure there is clarity on the limited number of elective course offerings in any given year. We will also continue our current practice of publicizing upcoming course offerings on the CAST unit webpage as soon as they are known and well before the first deadline in the admissions cycle.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts agrees. Transparency is important and students should know the nature of the program they are applying to.

FGPS Decanal Response: I can imagine all sorts of challenges to my response but is there a possibility that a rolling two-year course delivery schedule could be prepared and communicated on the program landing webpage, even if the year two courses are listed as tentative, to address this recommendation and aid meeting expectations of applying and incoming students? Reading further below, my suggestion may relate to Recommendation #13.

Recommendation #6: Consider ways of including community-engaged and action-oriented learning that aligns with the declared learning objectives of the program by exploring existing resources within Laurier, while paying attention to sustainable workload for CAST faculty.

Unit Response: As was also indicated in response to Recommendation #2, the CAST program is pleased to initiate conversations regarding community-engaged learning and action-oriented learning to determine how this might meet up with program objectives and pedagogy in particular courses. Understanding what existing resources are available at Laurier and how these strategies may already be used by graduate programs will help our program to assess fit for particular courses. We will invite relevant staff from Teaching and Learning and other university units to a meeting of the CoW to more fully inform us and to encourage important connections between university resources and our faculty. Again, however, a concern shared by both CAST and our reviewers is tied to workload. In particular, fulfilment of Recommendation #13 and the ability of CAST faculty to include CAST teaching as part of regular workload rather than on overload as it is currently for the majority is necessary, particularly since both community-engaged and action-oriented learning are more labour intensive for faculty leading these courses.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts encourages CAST to work with Teaching and Learning and other relevant units to explore how best to incorporate various forms of learning that serve students well. Faculty workload is an important factor that must be given consideration.

FGPS Decanal Response: I also very much appreciate the real and pressing issues with respect to faculty workload. This is an important recommendation, similar to Recommendation #2, but this likely cannot be addressed under a current 'overload' workload design. Faculty workload across the university is becoming increasingly well-recognized and resolving this issue is a leading objective of the new draft Strategic Academic Plan: "Laurier faculty members will have equitable, sustainable, and balanced workloads with an emphasis on the individual faculty member's strengths, interests, and professional aspirations balanced with the needs of the

academic sub-unit”. Nonetheless, as indicated above, I encourage further exploration of incorporating these impactful learning opportunities for graduate students of CAST and FGPS is available for consultation regarding program modification.

Recommendation #7: Review the skills training in the Colloquium to make it clearly relevant to both MRP and course-based students.

Unit Response: While we were surprised that students reported that they found advanced research skills training to be only relevant to those undertaking the MRP, the CAST Director (and Colloquium organizer) has already undertaken to shift the colloquium schedule on the basis of this recommendation to include more teaching and learning workshops, career development workshops, and research talks. Another shift happening in the coming year is that during the Colloquium we will develop skills in organizing and presenting at a student conference to be held in spring of 2023. This will support both MRP and coursework students. For this collaborative project, all CAST students will join faculty mentors to develop the conference from start to finish. The goal will be to work on event planning, mentoring students through the steps of conference planning and participation, and will emphasize collaboration and community building. We will also endeavour to continue to provide *optional* advanced research workshops for all students in addition to the required Colloquium offerings. The 2022-23 academic year will already see us trial this new approach and to gauge both MRP and coursework student response to it.

FOA Decanal Response: The CAST Director has responded appropriately to this concern raised by students.

FGPS Decanal Response: I agree – steps are being taken to address this recommendation. I encourage the program to consider incorporating elements of ASPIRE, Laurier’s professional skills and development training program for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, into the Colloquium. This could include requiring students to take workshops (or Certificates that are currently under development with anticipated launching in Fall 2023) or requesting ASPIRE partners contribute directly to the skills training component of the Colloquium beyond that which is currently taking place. For instance, given the writing-intensive nature of the program, sessions with Writing Services staff as part of the Colloquium may be useful to consider. Please reach out to Acting Associate Dean (FGPS), Patricia Goff, for more information about ASPIRE or to facilitate involvement of ASPIRE partners.

Recommendation #8: Consider encouraging/teaching more diverse modes of knowledge dissemination and mobilization beyond the scholarly paper in CAST courses.

Unit Response: Providing tools for more diverse modes of knowledge dissemination and mobilization beyond the scholarly paper was a central goal of the move away from the Major Research *Paper* and to the Major Research *Project*. Currently, a few instructors may permit or even encourage alternatives to the scholarly paper in courses, but this is not a common practice. Even when such options are made available, many students may not wish to engage it, preferring instead the scholarly paper because of its familiarity. The Curriculum Committee will be tasked to strategize how more diverse modes of knowledge dissemination and mobilization might be encouraged, including surveying faculty to assess existing skills that might support this. While

individual faculty can best assess steps to attainment of individual course objectives and the role different modes of presenting and disseminating research may play in this, discussing successful work that has been done in courses outside the scholarly paper and how to support this kind of work will help to support faculty who may wish to move more in this direction.

FOA Decanal Response: Allowing students to choose different methods of knowledge dissemination and mobilization will allow them to capitalize on strengths and to refine skills. These must be consistent with learning outcomes attached to each course.

FGPS Decanal Response: I understand the challenges associated with implementing this recommendation. I encourage the program to contact Shawna Reibling, Knowledge Mobilization Officer in the Office of Research Services, for consultation. Shawna may have suggestions or be able to contribute directly to addressing this recommendation.

Recommendation #9: Consider a review of the curriculum to decentre whiteness and Eurocentric traditions and knowledge systems, in line with the Scarborough Charter, the calls for action of the TRC and Laurier's Action Plan for EDI.

Unit Response: In the 2022-23 academic year, the CAST Curriculum Committee will be tasked to begin a review of our curriculum and core courses to consider its alignment with the Scarborough Charter, the TRC Calls to Action, and Laurier's EDI Action Plan in order to address this timely and important recommendation.

FOA Decanal Response: Revising curriculum to introduce greater diversity of perspective and intellectual traditions will be an important but demanding task, one that will honour the university and faculty's commitment to exploring knowledge from multiple angles.

FGPS Decanal Response: I encourage the program to reach out to the Centre for Student Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for helpful strategies upon embarking on the curriculum review process to address this recommendation.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES

Recommendation #10: Consider a broader range of capstone assessment methodologies, keeping in mind faculty and support constraints. This flexibility and choice will address student needs and assist them in demonstrating achievement in different ways, while still linked to the learning outcomes of the program.

Unit Response: Understanding how a wider range of capstone assignments might help to support the CAST curriculum and learning objectives is vital to addressing this recommendation. As the reviewers clearly indicate, "alternative assessment methodologies need to be approached carefully" (p. 7). Once again, support from Teaching and Learning must be sought on this to provide guidance about what other assessment methodologies might be pertinent to our graduate program and to understand how they might be successfully executed and also be supported by students. Existing university supports will once again be sought to inform us about

different models so that the program can assess their viability, particularly as we work toward encouraging more students to undertake capstone projects rather than simply papers.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports exploration of alternative assessment methodologies consistent with the program's stated outcomes.

FGPS Decanal Response: I support the program's response to consult with Teaching and Learning with respect to implementing a broader range of capstone assessment methodologies, but likewise acknowledge that this may be very attractive to students interested in alternatives to the conventional scholarly paper.

USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES

Recommendation #11: While recognizing the wider context of financial constraint within the FOA, the review committee urges consideration of an increase to the funds available to CAST for discretionary spending related to the program's curricular objectives.

Unit Response: While also recognizing the wider context of financial constraint within the FOA, the CAST program agrees that the decrease in discretionary funds for the program over the last seven years has posed a problem for meeting curricular objectives, most specifically for inviting guest speakers from outside the university and for funding of events such as an in-house graduate student conference that may serve both the professional development of current students and as a recruitment tool for prospective students.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts will do its best to provide funds to all programs and departments in an equitable manner.

FGPS Decanal Response: FGPS has no jurisdiction over these resources.

Recommendation #12: Through collaboration between CAST and the Dean of Arts, work together to secure a consistent summer course offering, ideally one that would also serve students in other programs, both to increase enrolment numbers and to create a space for greater intermixing of students across programs. The review committee suggests that this could be offered in a compressed format, perhaps during intersession, as a way of reducing impact on both faculty and student time commitments.

Unit Response: The CAST program wholeheartedly supports this recommendation. The CAST Director has had meetings with the Dean of Arts and solicited input from other graduate programs to determine the viability of a regular interdisciplinary spring term course offering in the FOA that may serve both CAST students and students from outside the program. A spring course offering, offered over six weeks starting in early May, is especially important to the CAST program to support the Coursework Option that is regularly taken up by around half our students in any given year. This recommendation is especially important to us given the current over-reliance on directed studies courses in past years to help students complete the coursework option. This also aligns with Recommendation #15 below.

FOA Decanal Response: It is in the interest of all our Master's level programs to provide greater summer options for graduate courses and the Dean of Arts will be in conversation with all interested parties on this matter.

FGPS Decanal Response: Reducing the number of Directed Studies courses, in cases where they do not help advance the faculty member's research program, should also lessen the burden on individual faculty.

Recommendation #13: Through collaboration from the Dean of Arts, Chairs, and the CAST Program Coordinator, develop a multi-year MOU or other mechanism to ensure a reliable source of instructors for CAST courses and secure a definitive move away from overload teaching in the program.

Response: The CAST program agrees that having a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning staffing for CAST courses would be helpful, both for our program and the home units of our members. In particular, it would help with planning, both for CAST and the home units of faculty who will be teaching in any given year. It will also communicate to home units of faculty members the terms of reference for those teaching in the CAST program. As we have seen recently, it would be helpful to have an MOU with these terms of reference so that new chairs or program coordinators are aware of what they are. Further, having an MOU might help to build consistency over time for our faculty since it appears that individual chairs or coordinators, even in the same program, may interpret participation in CAST differently. It is a priority for the CAST program that our faculty have the option of including CAST teaching in regular workload instead of having to teach the majority of our courses on overload. An MOU would permit clear communication about the terms of reference and enable continuity even when Deans and Chairs and Program Coordinators change. The CAST Director is happy to work with the Dean and Chairs and Program Coordinators to develop a multi-year MOU to help support a reliable source of instructors for our courses and to help secure a move away from overload teaching in the program.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts recognizes the challenges of staffing the CAST program, and will explore how best to provide the necessary support while retaining flexibility to be able to respond to the changing budgetary realities that are part of the current environment. Higher enrolment in CAST courses and the CAST program will help the Dean of Arts justify allocation of scarce resources.

Recommendation #14: Leadership is needed from the Deans and senior administration to achieve greater collaboration across graduate programs within FOA and across the wider university. Overall, the reviewers felt that Laurier should find ways to facilitate broader interdisciplinary course selection by students, including the potential for cross-listed courses.

Unit Response: The CAST program agrees that greater collaboration and communication across graduate programs would benefit all FOA-based programs as well as those outside the faculty that have salience, particularly as this would help facilitate interdisciplinary course selection for our students. The ability to take courses in other programs of study to supplement the interdisciplinary offerings in CAST is mentioned often by former CAST students as desirable. We also regularly accept students from other programs of study in CAST courses, and we know this is a benefit to our students. It is also necessary for coursework students to take at least one course in programs outside of CAST, so greater collaboration would also support these students. At

the moment, the ability of our students to take classes in other programs of study is up to the discretion of the instructor teaching individual courses (and the permission of the CAST Director).

Formal cross-listing of courses has historically been discouraged (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels) for reasons that are not entirely clear. Cross-listing may not have been pursued in the Faculty of Arts, not only because programs are concerned to maintain the identities of the individual programs, but also because of concerns about staffing cross-listed courses and the loss of resources. As mentioned earlier in this review response, the CAST program does favour exploring the development of an interdisciplinary spring course offering that may work across programs in the FOA and perhaps even attract students from other faculties. Such a course would not infringe on other programs but could provide support to them.

Collaboration among graduate programs across the wider university is in principle a very good idea where such collaboration might be productive. This may be the case, for example, between Brantford-based graduate programs and those in the FOA. However, given institutional organization across distinct faculties, it is expected this might once again be more challenging than rewarding, particularly given the limitations (transportation, cost-sharing, staffing) that led to the suspension of the Brantford side of the CAST program at the very start of the review period.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts agrees and supports further collaboration between graduate programs and will support exploration of the possibilities in the coming years as we allocate limited resources to small programs.

FGPS Decanal Response: Setting aside institutional barriers for the moment, I think there is tremendous opportunity to pursue collaboration (e.g., course offerings) among graduate programs, and to take further advantage of expertise across disciplines. This would no doubt be very attractive to the interdisciplinary interests of graduate students within CAST (and likely elsewhere in the FoA), and potentially serve to increase enrolments. CAST is best positioned to identify other potential programs where such collaboration would be fruitful, and perhaps this could be explored in discussions with graduate program coordinators. If this is of interest, I would be pleased to facilitate.

Recommendation #15: Building on #2 and #4 above, work to eliminate or significantly reduce reliance on direct studies courses, except in cases where these directly align with faculty member's research or teaching interests.

Unit Response: The CAST program is very concerned about its reliance on directed studies courses, as was indicated in our brief. Addressing this remains an absolute priority for our program. We believe a regular interdisciplinary spring course would go a long way toward reducing the need for directed studies courses and allow faculty to pursue these irregular courses as extensions of research and teaching interests rather than as a requirement for students to complete their coursework.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts recognizes the impact of Directed Studies courses on individual faculty members.

FGPS Decanal Response: I support the program's response. Would there be merit in considering reducing the number of courses required if they cannot be routinely met, even with the introduction of a spring course?

Recommendation #16: Enhanced funding opportunities for graduate students, including for international students. This requires leadership from Deans and senior administration.

Unit Response: The CAST program agrees that enhanced funding opportunities will help us to attract and retain more strong graduate students. Since the vast majority of inquiries from international students concern funding, we expect providing funding for these students in any form would also enhance our program. We support this recommendation in very high terms but note that response to it is rightly flagged as being outside the purview of our program.

FOA Decanal Response: Funding for international graduate students remains a real challenge for the university, and the Dean of Arts will continue to advocate that adequate funds to be provided to support this.

FGPS Decanal Response: Funding for international graduate students is a challenge not only for Laurier, but for universities across Ontario. Currently, the Faculty of Science provides funding for 2-yr research-intensive international Master's students, but there are very few other Master's program at Laurier where institutional support is provided to international students. Some Ontario universities have completely abandoned the practice of providing institutional support for any international Master's students. Improving practices and policies related to both domestic and international graduate student funding is a high priority of FGPS.

Recommendation #17: Explore possibilities to relocate CAST mailboxes and shared office space to a single area, perhaps close to the CAST Administrative Assistant; and that steps be taken to develop an Arts-dedicated graduate student space.

Unit Response: We have already begun to address this recommendation. CAST students now have program mailboxes in a single room close to the office of our Administrative Assistant on the 3rd floor of the Peters Building. (Students do also have mailboxes tied to their GTA positions at various sites, but the return of a common mailroom after significant times spent virtually during the pandemic is most welcome.) CAST students also have access to the graduate student lounge in the same space that is shared largely by Philosophy MA students, although it is open for all FoA graduate students to use. Additional spaces for graduate students in the FOA to congregate would be desirable, of course, but this centralization of a graduate mailboxes and a space they may use will go some way toward community building in a shared space.

FOA Decanal Response: No response necessary as the recommendation has already been addressed by the program sufficiently.

Recommendation #18: Expose students to a wider array of CAST faculty members. This could occur, for example, by assigning CAST faculty publications in mandatory course readings or by including presentations of faculty work in progress as part of Colloquium or core courses.

Unit Response: As was indicated in the "Clarifications and Corrections" section of this response, we have taken seriously the need to expose students to as many of our faculty as possible, and have developed strategies to address this, including some of the strategies included in the above recommendation. Under normal

circumstances, CAST students are exposed to at least 6 CAST faculty members in taught courses and an additional 2 in the context of Colloquium research talks in any given year. There are also regular guest presentations by faculty in CAST in the core and elective courses in order to provide additional teaching expertise to these classes. Faculty also attend our talks by both internal and external speakers throughout the years and attend meet and greet sessions with our faculty. These efforts do mean that students are exposed in more than one context to the majority of our faculty who are not on leave throughout the year. We agree that including faculty work as required reading in classes is desirable and will encourage instructors to consider adding reading materials tied to our own faculty members to their courses and encourage a greater number of guest appearances in courses.

FOA Decanal Response: CAST has already taken action to respond to this recommendation, so it is not being prioritized in the Implementation Plan.

Recommendation #19: Discuss ways to further optimize library support for CAST students in order to avoid potential repetition (e.g. with library instruction provided as part of TA training) and increase individual student engagement around research (e.g. making it mandatory for students to work with the librarian on the main research assignment in their core courses and/or on their MRP).

Unit Response: While we support the recommendation that repetition be avoided, we were surprised to hear that library instruction is a part of TA training. We have no knowledge of library orientations taking place through TA training. We do know that some of our students who hold GTA positions may be expected to support students in the courses for which they serve as a GTA by attending undergraduate library training in the event this is a part of the courses for which they are providing TA support. However, this is not universally the case as not all of our students are awarded GTAs and/or are placed in courses with dedicated library workshops. Library workshops are designed and delivered by our subject area librarian Joanne Oud to *support graduate level research specific to CAST* with early workshops serving to introduce incoming students, the majority of whom come from outside Laurier, to the Tri-University library system and its resources, and later workshops designed to help students focus on advanced research resources and skills that may be specifically aligned with their research in courses or for the MRP. Workshops that are designed to engage student research directly, often building on topics originating from the students themselves. Students are asked to work through research questions and supported in locating research materials around projects they are undertaking in classes or in areas of research interest. We were surprised to hear that these advanced research workshops have not been seen as valuable by non-MRP students since coursework students are invited to bring course-specific questions to these sessions.

Given the concerns raised in the report, we will reassess the role of library workshops in the Colloquium and consider ways that these workshops can better communicate their value outside the MRP. The CAST Director will also continue to work with our subject area specialist Librarian to update workshops and to address individual engagement in research, and will encourage instructors of core courses to include individual research work with Joanne Oud to encourage advanced research skills and use of library resources while being more explicitly tied to courses. It is our hope that our return to the student driven graduate conference will also help to animate greater engagement around research in a context that can supplement research workshops. The

conference may help to ground our library workshops by supporting the development of conference proposals and undertaking the research necessary to produce the conference paper.

FOA Decanal Response: Training of TAs is the responsibility of FGPS. Engagement by the library with graduate students is important and should be encouraged.

FGPS Decanal Response: The program is correct in their assertion that library training is not a component of institutional required GTA training, and it seems unlikely that this would be considered in the future. To further address the recommendation, beyond the activities listed in the program's response, engagement with the ASPIRE program and specifically workshops provided by the library (and Writing Services) could readily serve to enhance research skill development of CAST graduate students.

Recommendation #20: Reach out to Teaching and Learning, and to Community and Workplace Partnerships, to explore what supports might exist to strengthen the approach to experiential learning.

Unit Response: Per our responses above to recommendations concerning experiential learning, the CAST program is happy to reach out to Teaching and Learning and Community and Workplace Partnerships to explore supports for experiential learning. To this end, both units will be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee of the Whole to introduce us to available supports and existing programs in order to help ground our discussions of experiential learning and how it might fit with the curricular goals of CAST.

FOA Decanal Response: As per above, the Dean of Arts supports experiential learning that is consistent with program outcomes.

FACULTY QUALITY INDICATORS

Recommendation #21: Work with the Dean of Arts to support recruitment of additional faculty members to the program, in particular to address the need for more junior faculty and greater diversity.

Unit Response: CAST is aware of the need for additional faculty participation, and that more junior and diverse faculty would help us to build an even stronger faculty base for delivery of an excellent and unique graduate program offering. The CAST program welcomes support from the Dean of Arts to help us recruit additional faculty members and hope that this can be started as soon as Fall 2022. We note, however, the need to ensure junior and diverse faculty are protected from additional or unequitable workload conditions. We believe that undertaking an MOU (per Recommendation #13) concerning inclusion of CAST teaching in regular workload will go a long way toward helping to support these new faculty. This must be accompanied by agreements with individual departments or programs concerning service commitments to ensure workload equity.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts recognizes the important contribution to CAST made by a small number of faculty, and will continue to encourage broader participation by colleagues currently not a part of the program.

Recommendation #22: Consider meeting with research facilitators from the Office of Research to strategize around potential collaboration on research grants that could build on past success in this regard and potentially develop another research cluster linked to CAST.

Unit Response: The CAST program welcomes this recommendation, particularly since we are currently aiming to revive an extant research cluster that has been on hiatus during the pandemic (*Techne*) with the aim of expanding it to include more members. We are especially eager to explore opportunities for expanding research collaboration opportunities that may also include greater student participation. We will set up a meeting between interested unit members and research facilitators from the Office of Research to help us strategize next steps. Options for developing new research clusters will also be explored with the aim of encouraging and supporting CAST faculty research.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports this proposal to engage with the Office of Research Services.

FGPS Decanal Response: This is an excellent idea. Research grants, of course, could create opportunities for graduate students to contribute in the form of research assistants and studentships. I encourage faculty to routinely build these resources into the budgets for their research grant proposals.

Recommendation #23: Work with the Dean of Arts to foster an overall supportive climate for research in the FOA, empowering faculty to prioritize research over teaching and service when appropriate. This could include targeted support to faculty in programs like CAST, so that they might move out of a “labour of love” scenario.

Response: We welcome the opportunity to help develop a more supportive climate for research in the FOA in which research may be prioritized. Targeted supports to encourage research and equitably manage overload work in both teaching and service for CAST members will go some way toward helping our members work toward this goal.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts places great value on the importance of research and will continue to foster a supportive climate.

GRADUATE STUDENT QUALITY INDICATORS

Recommendation #24: A recommendation on transparency around course offerings for the upcoming year is included under Curriculum and is also relevant in relation to the student feedback discussed in this section.

Unit Response: We have addressed this recommendation in our response to Recommendation #5 above.

FOA Decanal Response: The program has already responded to this recommendation appropriately in Recommendation #5.

FGPS Decanal Response: See above response to Recommendation #5.

Recommendation #25: A recommendation on increasing the representation of BIPOC and Global South perspectives is included under Curriculum and is also relevant in relation to the student feedback discussed in this section.

Unit Response: The CAST program agrees that greater representation of BIPOC and Global South perspectives is desirable and appropriate to our curricular goals. We will continue to work with faculty to expand and develop this representation in core courses and across the curriculum. We believe our work in response to Recommendation #9 will serve as a vital foundation for responding to this recommendation as well.

FOA Decanal Response: The program has already responded to this recommendation (see #9) about incorporating greater diversity into the CAST curriculum, and I support the steps that they have outlined to address it.

FGPS Decanal Response: I agree with the FoA Decanal Response.

Recommendation #26: For Deans and senior administration: re-evaluate the restrictive policy about numbers of international students permitted, moving from one to at least two international students allowed per CAST cohort.

Unit Response: The CAST program supports an increase in the number of permitted international students per cohort. We know from experience that international student participation enhances our program as well as the student experience.

FOA Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts will continue to advocate for international graduate students to be part of graduate programs, recognizing the valuable perspectives they bring to the intellectual conversation.

FGPS Decanal Response: I agree with the perspective of the value that international students bring to graduate programs. See response to Recommendation #16.

Recommendation #27: Consider ways of promoting the program more broadly, especially considering Canadian graduate student audiences outside Ontario.

Unit Response: While we have had some success with recruiting students from BC, Manitoba, and the Atlantic provinces, we are aware that we would be well served to develop means of promoting the program more broadly. We welcome input from graduate recruiters and FGPS for helping us to develop the tools to promote ourselves consistently and well both within and outside of Ontario. At the moment, all targeted recruitment work that focuses on CAST is undertaken by the program (mainly by the Director). Working with recruitment offices at Laurier would be helpful to determine what tools and resources may be available to us and how we might tap into them to enhance our recruitment efforts.

FOA Decanal Response: Recruitment efforts beyond Ontario are certainly valuable, and I encourage the program to reach out to those audiences who may be able to support them in doing so.

FGPS Decanal Response: Please contact Jessica Hunt, Communications Coordinator (FGPS), who can assist with marketing and recruitment strategies.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Recommendation #28: See above sections for recommendations relevant to quality enhancement.

Unit Response: CAST is dedicated to quality enhancement across our program. As we have indicated in our responses to the above #27 recommendations, many of which are interrelated, we look forward to thinking through the suggestions for improving our program and considering how we might apply them to help enhance our already strong and vital interdisciplinary community.

FOA Decanal Response: No response necessary given the context of the recommendation.

FGPS Decanal Response: I appreciate the sincerity of the program response, and reiterate that FGPS is available for consultation on program modifications that are being considered.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: CAST is a program that is valued by faculty and students alike. It is the primary interdisciplinary program in the Faculty of Arts, and attracts strong students every year. A great strength of the program is its leader, Dr. Penelope Ironstone who has faithfully guided the program over the years. As the Review demonstrates, CAST is a program with significant strengths: with modification to reflect current emphases up on facilitating student action, it can be even stronger.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: A key and core strength of CAST is its collaborative and interdisciplinary focus, historically drawing on expertise and accomplished scholars from numerous departments at both Waterloo and Brantford campuses. This has attracted scholarship-winning graduate students from diverse backgrounds. CAST provides graduate students with a strong theoretical and methodological foundation (achieved through engaging courses including the CAST Colloquium and development of research skills both within and outside of the MRP) to address pressing issues and challenges in the realms of cultural analysis and social theory.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

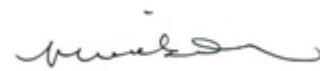
Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: I concur with the Review that the opportunity exists for CAST to take steps towards incorporating more concrete experiential learning opportunities that will enable students to continue to refine competencies and skills that will enable them to contribute to positive social change (informed by a critical perspective) in the future.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: I agree with the comments above. Exploring opportunities to enhance experiential learning via co-op or Community Service-Learning approaches would complement the current and strong theoretical and methodological focus of the program, and likely be very attractive to graduate students as means to obtain professional experience.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Mary Wilson

January 6, 2023



Dr. Heidi Northwood

January 9, 2023



Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee:

January 19, 2023

**Approved by Senate Academic Planning
Committee:**

March 21, 2023

Submitted to Senate (for information):

April 12, 2023

Implementation Report Due Date:

April 12, 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The following Implementation Plan was created by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as part of the Decanal Response.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
1. Continue emphasizing the importance of its interdisciplinary approach to the university's goals of advancing academic excellence and equipping students with "future readiness" in the face of complex societal challenges.	CAST Program		Ongoing	
2. Reflect further on the place and shape of experiential learning in its theory-focussed program objectives (see Curriculum recommendations for some specific ideas).	CAST Program		Fall 2023	
3. To ensure the success and long-term viability of programs like CAST, we encourage the university administration to recognize that interdisciplinarity is not merely a pedagogical issue but also an administrative one, and therefore to actively elevate and support it. This could mean its inclusion in future academic strategies, but also requires measures to	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	

operationalize, incentivize and reward efforts to cultivate interdisciplinarity.				
4. Reflect on the role of admission requirements in light of current and future challenges of approaching university education in a more inclusive manner that embraces more diverse and inclusive ways of knowing.	CAST Program in consultation with Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies		Fall 2023	
5. Create transparency for applying and incoming students about the breadth of (elective) courses offered in each field, and clarify on the webpage which courses/electives will be offered in any given academic year to avoid expectations that cannot be met by the program within its resource limitations.	CAST Program		Summer 2023	In conjunction with Recommendation #24.
6. Consider ways of including community-engaged and action-oriented learning that aligns with the declared learning objectives of the program by exploring existing resources within Laurier, while paying attention to sustainable workload for CAST faculty.	CAST Program		Fall 2023	
7. Review the skills training in the Colloquium to make it clearly relevant to both MRP and course-based students.	CAST Program		Summer 2023	

8. Consider encouraging/teaching more diverse modes of knowledge dissemination and mobilization beyond the scholarly paper in CAST courses.	CAST Program		Summer 2023	
9. Consider a review of the curriculum to decentre whiteness and Eurocentric traditions and knowledge systems, in line with the Scarborough Charter, the calls for action of the TRC and Laurier's Action Plan for EDI.	CAST Program		Winter 2024	In conjunction with Recommendation #25.
10. Consider a broader range of capstone assessment methodologies, keeping in mind faculty and support constraints. This flexibility and choice will address student needs and assist them in demonstrating achievement in different ways, while still linked to the learning outcomes of the program.	CAST Program		Fall 2023	
11. While recognizing the wider context of financial constraint within the FOA, the review committee urges consideration of an increase to the funds available to CAST for discretionary spending related to the program's curricular objectives.	Dean of Arts Office		Ongoing	

<p>12. Through collaboration between CAST and the Dean of Arts, work together to secure a consistent summer course offering, ideally one that would also serve students in other programs, both to increase enrolment numbers and to create a space for greater intermixing of students across programs. The review committee suggests that this could be offered in a compressed format, perhaps during intersession, as a way of reducing impact on both faculty and student time commitments.</p>	<p>CAST Program in consultation with Dean of Arts Office</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	
<p>13. Through collaboration from the Dean of Arts, Chairs, and the CAST Program Coordinator, develop a multi-year MOU or other mechanism to ensure a reliable source of instructors for CAST courses and secure a definitive move away from overload teaching in the program.</p>	<p>CAST Program and Dean of Arts Office</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	
<p>14. Leadership is needed from the Deans and senior administration to achieve greater collaboration across graduate programs within FOA and across the wider university. Overall, the reviewers felt that Laurier should find ways to facilitate broader interdisciplinary course selection</p>	<p>Dean of Arts Office</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	

by students, including the potential for cross-listed courses.				
15. Building on #2 and #4 above, work to eliminate or significantly reduce reliance on direct studies courses, except in cases where these directly align with faculty member's research or teaching interests.	CAST Program		Winter 2024	
16. Enhanced funding opportunities for graduate students, including for international students. This requires leadership from Deans and senior administration.	Dean of Arts Office, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies		Ongoing	
17. Explore possibilities to relocate CAST mailboxes and shared office space to a single area, perhaps close to the CAST Administrative Assistant; and that steps be taken to develop an Arts-dedicated graduate student space.	CAST Program in collaboration with Dean of Arts Office		Winter 2023	
18. Expose students to a wider array of CAST faculty members. This could occur, for example, by assigning CAST faculty publications in mandatory course readings or by including presentations of faculty work in progress as part of Colloquium or core courses.	<i>This recommendation has not been prioritized as it is already current practice.</i>			

<p>19. Discuss ways to further optimize library support for CAST students in order to avoid potential repetition (e.g. with library instruction provided as part of TA training) and increase individual student engagement around research (e.g. making it mandatory for students to work with the librarian on the main research assignment in their core courses and/or on their MRP).</p>	<p>CAST Program in consultation with Library</p>			
<p>20. Reach out to Teaching and Learning, and to Community and Workplace Partnerships, to explore what supports might exist to strengthen the approach to experiential learning.</p>	<p>CAST Program</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	
<p>21. Work with the Dean of Arts to support recruitment of additional faculty members to the program, in particular to address the need for more junior faculty and greater diversity.</p>	<p>CAST Program in consultation with Dean of Arts Office</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>22. Consider meeting with research facilitators from the Office of Research to strategize around potential collaboration on research grants that could build on past success in this regard and potentially develop another research cluster linked to CAST.</p>	<p>CAST Program and Office of Research Services</p>			

<p>23. Work with the Dean of Arts to foster an overall supportive climate for research in the FOA, empowering faculty to prioritize research over teaching and service when appropriate. This could include targeted support to faculty in programs like CAST, so that they might move out of a “labour of love” scenario.</p>	<p>CAST Program in consultation with Dean of Arts Office</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>24. A recommendation on transparency around course offerings for the upcoming year is included under Curriculum and is also relevant in relation to the student feedback discussed in this section.</p>	<p>CAST Program</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	<p>In conjunction with Recommendation #5.</p>
<p>25. A recommendation on increasing the representation of BIPOC and Global South perspectives is included under Curriculum and is also relevant in relation to the student feedback discussed in this section.</p>	<p>CAST Program</p>		<p>Winter 2024</p>	<p>In conjunction with Recommendation #9.</p>
<p>26. For Deans and senior administration: re-evaluate the restrictive policy about numbers of international students permitted, moving from one to at least two international students allowed per CAST cohort.</p>	<p>Dean of Arts Office and Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	

<p>27. Consider ways of promoting the program more broadly, especially considering Canadian graduate student audiences outside Ontario.</p>	<p>CAST Program in consultation with Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies</p>		<p>Fall 2023</p>	
<p>28. See above sections for recommendations relevant to quality enhancement.</p>	<p><i>This recommendation has not been prioritized as it has already been captured in the previous recommendations.</i></p>			