



October 4, 2017

Professor Sioban Nelson
Vice-Provost Academic Programs
University of Toronto

Dear Sioban,

I am writing in response to the request by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) in regards to the January 14-15, 2016 external review of the Ethics, Society and Law Undergraduate Program. At its meeting of November 1, 2016, AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report addressing the progress on: 1) the broad issue of long-term sustainability of the program; and 2) support for sessional instructors. The Faculty has worked with Trinity College Dean of Arts Michael Ratcliffe and Program Director John Duncan to address the concerns of the AP&P committee, and we have now taken steps to address these issues.

Issue 1: Long-term sustainability of the program

Student interest: There has never been an issue with respect to student demand for the program. The program admits 75-80 students per year from a group of more than 500 applicants. As such, Trinity College remains firmly committed to the ES&L program and has increased its financial support for the program over the last two years. Furthermore, many continuing faculty at U of T regularly contribute student research supervision, course instruction, and advice to the program.

Relationships with Cognate units: Over the past several months, the Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, and the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate and International, have initiated a set of discussions with the Program Director and Chairs of cognate units (Philosophy, Sociology, Political Science); discussions have focused on ES&L students' access to courses in these key areas, and possible avenues for collaboration. Further, ongoing discussions between the Program Director and these three units, along with the Center for Indigenous Studies (with whose significant support, ES&L is hosting a course in 2017-18), the Center for Ethics, and the Faculty of Law (with whom ES&L hosts 2 program courses, 1 of which is required), are leading to the creation of the ES&L Council, which will provide program oversight. With representation from the program, cognate units, and the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Council will provide a forum for program development, discussion of relevant course offerings, availability of non-sessional teaching resources, and facilitate the regular transfer of information between the program and the Faculty.

Curriculum: The program is notable for the flexibility of program design. Students are required to take five core half courses and to complement these by choosing nine half-courses from a group of elective courses. The program is also considering the development of a series of “focus areas.” This would allow students to take a degree program in ES&L “with a focus in ...” one of a few key areas, supported by cognate units. Introducing such focus areas into the program would help build stronger connections with the cognate units.

Issue 2: Support for sessional instructors

Numbers: Over the last year, the program has reduced the number of sessional instructors by focusing on the required courses in the program and ensuring that these core courses are taught by tenured faculty. Three second year half-courses (each accommodating the entire incoming class of 75-80), three sections of the third year small class seminar, and four sections of the fourth year small class seminar make up the required courses. As a result of this re-focusing, currently only one section of one of the courses is taught by a sessional instructor.

There remains a higher proportion of sessional instructors in optional program courses, a decision in part designed to bring in the requisite professional expertise and provide unique insights to students. For example, the instructor for the Law Workshops course (TRN425) draws on both a career as a lawyer in practice and an SJD degree. This is also true for TRN304 & 305.

Space: In the summer of 2017, Trinity College underwent a major reorganization of office space, a goal of which was to cluster office space according to program/discipline. All ES&L instructors now have office space in the Larkin Building, housing them in the same building as the U of T Center for Ethics, supporting greater interaction. This physical reorganization also allows for the further development of instructor collegiality, and facilitates regular meetings to generate clearer mutual understandings of the scope of each course within the program.

I feel confident that these changes initiated by the College, the program, and its faculty address the concerns of the AP&P follow-up request.

Sincerely,



David Cameron
Dean and Professor of Political Science

cc: Michael Ratcliffe, Dean of Arts, Trinity College
John Duncan, Director, Ethics, Society & Law

Poppy Lockwood, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning & Strategic Initiatives