

Final Assessment Report

Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2017/18)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on September 12, 2017.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Monica Stellin (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Alexie Tcheuyap (University of Toronto) and an internal reviewer, June Corman (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on November 8-10, 2017.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on January 12, 2018.
5. The Department's response was received on March 19, 2018.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on March 1, 2018.
7. The Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on Apr 6, 2018.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

The academic programs offered by the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures which were examined and rated as part of the review were:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA (Honours) in French Studies		X		
BA (Honours)/BEd in French Studies		X		
BA (Pass) in French Studies		X		
Minor in French Studies		X		
BA (Honours) Combined in Hispanic and Latin American Studies			X	
BA (Pass) Combined in Hispanic and Latin American Studies			X	
Minor in Hispanic and Latin American Studies		X		
BA (Honours) Combined in Italian Studies			X	
BA (Pass) in Italian			X	
Minor in Italian Studies		X		
BA (Honours) Combined in Studies in Comparative Literature and Cultures				X
Minor in German Studies		X		

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

Over recent years the Department has delivered an impressive set of Majors and Minors in European languages, complemented by the recent inclusion of courses in Classic Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian and Swahili. Especially notable is the BA-BEd in French Studies--an offering that well complements the other programs offered in the Department and Faculty of Humanities. More recently, traditional course offerings in literature and culture--aiming at assisting students in increasing their understanding and expanding their perspective of other cultures--were complemented by professional-skills courses, supported when possible by experiential learning, to engage them in an interconnected world.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation 1 - Immediate Reform

...it is the opinion of the Review Committee that the Department must act immediately to renew, restructure and/or reconsider its programs, both individually and as a whole.

In its response, the Department stated:

While the Reviewers praise our "excellent Faculty", they are calling for immediate reform: "renew, restructure etc.". Unfortunately, the recommendation remains rather vague, and there are no suggestions as to what direction MLLC should take. Clarification would be welcome.

Programs are always open to new ideas regarding curriculum renewal and innovative pedagogy and will continue to revise their programs to reflect students' needs, as they are currently doing and have consistently done over the past years in the spirit of emphasizing the value of a traditional Liberal Arts education.

The Faculty Dean stated that:

The Dean recognizes the Department's ongoing efforts to review and revise curriculum on an annual basis and will continue to support innovative pedagogy as it develops. A Curriculum Committee, per Recommendation # 2 below, might assist with this.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. Recommendations #1-4 deal with curriculum review with Recommendation 3 providing suggestions on how to begin this process. Changes to the programs must be reflective of the resources (human, financial and physical) which are presently available to the Department.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 2 - Curriculum Committee

The Reviewers recommend the Creation of a Curriculum Committee to plan and coordinate the proposed changes to the Department programs.

In its response, the Unit stated:

The Department supports the formation of a Curriculum Committee; however, the statement made by the reviewers that changes to programs and course offerings be “presented in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration in the interest of the Department” is key. This implies that Recommendation #9 must be implemented before a Curriculum Committee can be effective.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean acknowledges the value of Recommendation # 9 below, already in the process of implementation, but feels that the formation of a Curriculum Committee is a valid approach and should not be dependent on the timing of Recommendation # 9’s actions.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and encourages the Department to begin this process as soon as possible, utilizing the curriculum maps developed for the Self Study as a starting point. See also the response to Recommendation #1.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 3 - Curricular Changes

It is recommended that the Department, or Departmental Curriculum Committee, once created, discuss the following changes, applicable to each of its programs or courses as appropriate to their individual characteristics, based on the requirements and courses listed in a new Curriculum:

- Introduction of placements test for the French BA and BA-Ed.
- Changes to course descriptions and outlines: elimination of traditional categorization and periodization, introduction of areas or themes;
- Introduction of more courses in language pedagogy, children's literature, cultural studies, cinema, arts and culture; creation of courses in contemporary literature, digital humanities;
- Update the Undergraduate Calendar to reflect the courses taught in recent academic years;
- Check the consistency of course descriptions across language programs;
- Offer a wider variety of formats with more online, blended, experiential and community outreach courses.
- Based on the Self-Study Report data, students have shown interest in programs that are geared towards the acquisition of professional linguistic skills, such as the French BA-B.Ed. It is recommended that, in reforming its programs, the Department consider diversifying its degrees, giving each of them specific objectives, by offering Majors or Minors either in 'Studies', which include courses taught in English or cross-listed, or in a 'Language', the latter oriented more towards language learning or acquiring linguistic skills --also in specific fields or with specific purposes. The Department has already introduced courses aiming towards the students' professionalization. Introductory courses to benefit language skills for tourism in the Niagara region, social and health workers and business, make the programs even more attractive.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department can, through the Curriculum Committee, attempt to look at thematically-oriented (perhaps suited for SCLC [Studies in Comparative Literatures and Cultures] courses), online, blended, experiential and community outreach components in relevant courses, while maintaining a healthy balance between these new components and in class components.

Only if and when funding and staff are made available could a placement test be introduced for students.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean agrees with the Department that a Curriculum Committee, per Recommendation # 2, could oversee the development of the ideas expressed in the Reviewers' recommendation. Indeed the course calendar should be updated to reflect courses taught in the last three years, per the established regulations of UPC. The Dean supports in principle the idea of a placement test and encourages the Department to find ways and means to make this work to the benefit of incoming students.

The Report from the Senate Undergraduate Program Committee stated:

The only comment members had was to encourage the MMLC [MLLC] to update their course descriptions and to ensure that the courses listed are in fact what is offered.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. See also the responses to Recommendations #1 and 2.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)
Responsible for approving: Department
Responsible for resources: Department
Responsible for implementation: Department
Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 4 - Fourth Hour of Oral Practice

This Review Committee recommends the curricular addition of a fourth in-class conversation hour a week in those courses and levels that can benefit from it, to provide more exposure and promote oral discussion and interaction in smaller groups.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department accepts this recommendation and would be willing to implement it in 1st and 2nd year language courses, where they do not currently exist, if financial support is provided. A further consideration of the additional 4th hour raises issues with CUPE and Scheduling (especially evening courses).

The current model in the public-school curriculum seems to favour conversation over grammar; however, anecdotal evidence gleaned from students as well as personal experience of members has shown beyond a doubt that the most effective means of acquiring spoken skills as an adult learner is to first grasp the mechanics of the language.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean accepts this recommendation as a valid pedagogical practice and suggests that the Department explore viable models of delivery using existing resources in a 4-hour format at other institutions, and previous successful models in LATI and GREE courses at Brock.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the Recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 5 - More Cultural Exposure *in Loco*

The Department should arrange for MLLC students to benefit from similar opportunities to practice the language orally and be exposed to cultural experiences on campus and locally.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department is and has always been committed to continue building on existing strengths and establishing new partnerships to provide more cultural exposure.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean recognizes the Department’s ongoing efforts to provide students with relevant cultural experiences on and off campus and thus believes this recommendation is already being implemented.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the Recommendation to be accepted and recognizes that it reflects current practice for the Department.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 6 - Collaboration with Linguistics

It is to the benefit of all Department's programs to create more collaborations also with the Department of Linguistics, especially in the areas of psychology of language, sociolinguistics, literacy in childhood and youth, child language acquisition, language learning, and materials and curriculum design.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department will explore and discuss a collaboration with the Department of Applied Linguistics given that there are currently cross-listed courses with Linguistics in SCLC. The Department believes that there may be other Centres or Departments with a greater potential synergy with MLLC. (See recommendation 8.)

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the exploration of mutually beneficial collaborations with other units and agrees that this is not necessarily limited to LING.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the Recommendation to investigate collaborations with Linguistics to be accepted.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 7 - Revision of Staffing Practices

Courses at all levels should be taught by all full-time faculty members. Tenured faculty should participate also in the teaching of lower level courses.

In its response, the Department stated:

This is a valid recommendation which can be implemented to varying degrees in the various programs. For example, all French Studies faculty members already must teach courses at the first or second-year level if they wish to teach fourth-year courses. Further involvement in first and second- year courses would impact negatively the delivery of upper level courses, which should be taught by BUFA specialists, rather than CUPE instructors. This recommendation is therefore not applicable (or, to be more precise, is already effective).

Smaller sections, though not opposed to the practice, are concerned that such a practice would impose transferring the teaching of some of their upper level courses to non-BUFA members.

This is a valid recommendation that highlights the need for the creation of more full-time positions within the Department.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean strongly supports the recommendation that full-time faculty members participate on a regular basis in the teaching of introductory language courses, and that these responsibilities be shared equally by all members of the Department. Good teaching in the first year courses is critical for student success, and is best provided by full-time faculty members. While it is clear that many part-time instructors are gifted teachers, it is dangerous to rely on being able to get the best instructors in this way. First year courses are where the recruitment of majors happens, and strong, consistent instruction there is of great importance.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Committee strongly encourages the Department to work towards full-time faculty teaching at all course levels, utilizing the resources presently available and in concert with the curriculum changes suggested in Recommendations #1-4.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 8 - B.A SCLC - to be discontinued and replaced

Since the program was introduced a number of years ago [2010] with no results, the Review Committee recommends that the Hons. B.A. in Studies in Comparative Literatures and Cultures be discontinued. The Reviewers also recommend it to be replaced with a new Departmental program based on a sense of collegiality and collaboration, which could be in Studies in Languages (Literatures and Cultures), Intercultural Studies, European Studies, Romance Languages, or similar.

In its response, the Department stated:

As it would reinforce multidisciplinary and cultural practices in MLLC, a STAC [Studies in Arts and Culture] co-major would be a fitting replacement and would offer a suitable complement to students preparing for SCLA [MA in Studies in Comparative Literatures and Arts].

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean agrees with the recommendation that the BA in SCLC be discontinued and encourages the Department to explore viable options for replacing it with a vibrant interdisciplinary alternative.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the Recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Request for Program Discontinuation should be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 9 - Climate Review

It is the opinion of the Reviewers that a Climate Review is urgently needed and must be conducted in the Department ASAP.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department fully supports any efforts at mediation of unresolved internal issues, although it is important to appreciate the collegiality that exists among the majority of the faculty and part-time instructors.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the idea of a climate review to address the issues in the recommendation and notes that this is already underway. Any resulting reports should be considered carefully.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the Recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 4,5,6,8,9

Second Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,3,7