



# 2016-2017 Cyclical Program Review of Languages and Literatures

## PROGRAMS:

Honours BA French

Honours BA French in Combination with another Honours BA Program

Honours BA Languages

Honours BA Spanish

Honours BA Spanish in Combination with another Honours BA Program

## Final Assessment Report

Submitted by: Dr. Richard Nemesvari, Dean, Faculty of Arts; Dr. Kathryn Carter, Associate Vice-President: Teaching and Learning; Dr. Paul Jessop, Vice-President: Academic

Date: April 18, 2017

## **PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE**

### **A) SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS**

#### **Summary of Self-Study**

- The self-study describes the evolution of the Department of Languages and Literatures and focuses on the synergies created between the five languages offered in the program. Self-study preparation was led by Dr. Nathalie Freidel in collaboration with faculty. Recommendations from the previous review are included and the department's progress on each has been articulated on such issues as the development of minors, curricular review, and placement testing. The document asks reviewers to comment on ways to maintain the quality of the programs, offering more culture courses taught in English, and ways to increase engagement with administrative duties in the department.
- The document articulates the program-level learning outcomes and describes the process by which they were developed. It outlines alignment with the Laurier's Strategic Mandate Agreement and Academic Plan demonstrating such core principles as academic excellence, experiential learning, and diversity. Since Languages and Literatures programs are not direct entry, entry average and admission requirements are set by the Faculty of Arts and the Admissions office.
- The curriculum in the Languages and Literatures programs is unique in the variety of combinations it offers, including the H.B.A. in Languages which is unique in Canada. Curriculum is organized to flow through the introduction of concepts, reinforce them throughout the programs, with students mastering each learning outcome by the time they graduate. Faculty participate in workshops on teaching effectiveness and collaborate with other programs and support services on campus to incorporate innovative learning strategies throughout their curriculum. High Impact Practices include active learning pedagogies, tutorials and labs, residence learning communities, the flipped-classroom model, study abroad courses, and international exchanges. Curriculum is regularly refreshed to ensure high quality and innovative classroom experiences for students, and faculty research is regularly integrated to ensure courses stay up-to-date. Course caps in first-year courses have been lowered to provide more interaction with faculty throughout students' first year experience, and the department offers a variety of Online Learning courses in French and Spanish.
- Languages and Literatures' use of existing resources is efficient and effective. Department resources such as computer labs are well maintained and up-to-date. Library resources are adequate and faculty work closely with the liaison librarian to develop collections and identify needs. The department's administrative structure is articulated and the process for decision-making and departmental processes are included in the self-study.
- Faculty have been successful in their research funding and the data shows the active and collaborative nature of this research. Faculty expertise is well aligned with their teaching areas and faculty are active in contributing to the program, their research profiles, and the wider academic community. The collective faculty sustains the department's well-rounded programs with specialists in literature, cultural studies, film studies, second-language acquisition, and linguistics.

- Students in the program have been successful in graduating with distinction or high distinction and have received gold medals from the Faculty of Arts. GPA at graduation is rising across the department and is in line with the Faculty of Arts averages. Teaching Evaluations in the program are consistently high and typically exceed both the Faculty and University averages. Placement rates for students who continue their education at other institutions are very high, and many students go on to further post-secondary degrees or teacher preparation programs. Alumni show a very high degree of satisfaction with the program and employment rates are consistently high.
- The program's strategic plan continues to align with Laurier's overall Strategic Academic Plan and focuses on internationalization, cultural diversity, interconnectedness, and recognition of service teaching. The department continues to adapt its curriculum and methods of assessment to new cohorts of students with changing needs and expectations, and collaborates with other programs to enhance the interconnectedness of the institution. The department has responded creatively and successfully to the challenges it has faced since its last review and has managed to continue to offer a high quality, unique set of programs that appeal to a variety of students and incorporate a variety of innovative and impactful practices.

### **External Reviewers' Report**

The external reviewers for the Languages and Literatures cyclical review were Dr. Kevin Spooner from the North American Studies Program at Wilfrid Laurier University, Dr. Dawn Cornelio from the School of Languages and Literatures at the University of Guelph, and Dr. Rita De Grandis from the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia. The site visit took place on December 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at Wilfrid Laurier.

### ***Executive Summary***

The Department of Languages and Literatures at Laurier has thoughtfully developed and currently delivers an impressive suite of majors and minors. Especially notable is the B.A. in Languages, an offering that distinguishes the department from comparable institutions in southwest Ontario. Recent resource challenges have led the department to apply a 'studies' model to some language minors. While essential to the B.A., the minors also currently provide, and will present, additional opportunities to engage non-language majors in the department's academic programming. The department is, therefore, well positioned to develop important programmatic linkages with other constituencies in the university. The quality of faculty teaching and research is most impressive; especially notable are the many high impact teaching practices applied to student learning. The review committee's recommendations primarily address potential opportunities for consolidating, strengthening, and highlighting existing/potential elements of the department's academic programs. Ensuring continued student satisfaction, and the fiscal implications of a new university budget model, will require the department to carefully and strategically consider cross-institutional (with University of Waterloo) requirements for students to complete required courses for majors and minors. In general, the department has evolved a coherent and efficient curricular framework that serves its students very well; has brought together a committed, teaching-talented, and productive group of tenured and contract faculty; and it has definite potential to build on its curricular foundation to develop program connections with other departments and faculties within the university.

***List of Recommendations***

1. To build on the strength of Community Service Learning, the committee recommends the unit seek ways to formalise and integrate experiential learning into a free-standing course available to the varied language majors and minors pursuing studies with Languages & Literatures. Such a course would encourage a sense of unity across languages of study, for both students and faculty, and would provide an opportunity to develop and extend wider institutional linkages, with Laurier's Community Service-Learning Department. Such a course could be used to allow students to do research on the benefits of such learning, to formally reflect on their experience, and to unify the different activities that students participate in across the unit by culminating in an event like a poster session at the end of the semester.
2. The committee notices that the self-study emphasizes study abroad for improving Communication Skills. While study abroad is obviously ideal for language and cultural mastery, it goes without saying that students who are not able to take advantage of this opportunity will also have the occasion to obtain linguistic and cultural fluency through on-site activities. The committee recommends that the Department identify in a more systematic way the manners in which communication skills are fostered on campus and in the community. These activities could then be more directly highlighted, celebrated, and publicized.
3. Some students and faculty who met with the committee indicated dissatisfaction with the need, in some instances, for students to take courses at the University of Waterloo to complete program requirements. The committee suggests exploring the possibility of rotating campuses where courses are offered, perhaps cycling them annually. This challenge seemed most notable with respect to Arabic and German. Continued improvement in course coordination between the two universities and communication with students as to availability and registration processes might alleviate some of this dissatisfaction.
4. Due to its innovative pedagogy, Languages & Literatures could continue to develop Online Learning courses, with a more strategic focus targeting non-traditional learners. Languages & Literatures could explore the possibility of a Online Learning certificate for language-related topics for those in business, for example, or as a value-added component of an undergrad degree. Before pursuing this, the department should review what is offered on line at UW and at Conestoga College, so as to avoid redundancy.
5. In dealing with high course caps, the possibility of better managing filters was mentioned, in particular, finding a way to better communicate enrollment issues to majors and minors so they enroll in the courses before registration filters are lifted. Additionally, some students who met with the committee identified scheduling overlap in the timetabling of courses within the department. The committee acknowledges that some scheduling issues may be well beyond the control of the department, but to the degree that it is possible to avoid course conflicts and to effectively communicate with students regarding course registration processes, the department is encouraged to do so.
6. In order to standardize assessment, the committee suggests refining learning outcomes to demonstrate language level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This will help students be more aware of the common the expectations of each level of study, and to notice their progress as they move from level to level. It can also be helpful to students on the job market as they will be able to explicitly describe their level of competence.
7. As the university transitions to its new budget model, Languages & Literatures should work closely with the Office of the Dean of Arts to carefully monitor the benefits and costs associated with Laurier students

taking courses, required to complete programs, at UW. In some instances, cross-university cooperation in the delivery of program requirements might make good curricular sense. This motivation will need to be balanced against apparent student reticence to take courses even at a neighbouring university and potential fiscal implications.

8. The review committee is understanding of current and on-going financial constraints, but nonetheless encourages the unit, and the Faculty of Arts, to explore possibilities for re-establishing and staffing a language lab, especially if it could be shared with other units in the Faculty. Perhaps there is a naming opportunity that could be explored with Alumni Affairs.
9. It was pointed out to the review committee members that faculty provide some office coverage when the administrative assistant is on holiday, which brings up the question of the best use of faculty resources. The committee would suggest that faculty time could be put to better use (e.g. advancing their research) if, perhaps, a floater or other ad-hoc help were made available as needed.
10. The undergraduate Instructional Assistants the committee met with expressed a desire to have more information and more clarity in terminology and purpose of teaching they are involved in. For example, the terms 'tutorial' and 'conversation hours' are both used, and lead to student confusion as to whether this time is to be used to reinforce material covered in lectures or for oral practice - or perhaps both. The committee urges Languages & Literatures to be more consistent and explicit in its expectations and intent, both with the IAs and the students enrolled in the classes. The IAs also requested greater support during the semester, perhaps with course coordinators visiting and giving feedback or even peer evaluation between IAs. Perhaps a partnership for training and teaching advice throughout the term could be established with the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence.
11. To go beyond the unit to the Faculty of Arts and the University as a whole, the committee suggests exploring the following connections:
  - a) Create offerings that would allow business students (even those not specifically interested in international business) to become more aware of cultural differences that must be addressed in the business world
  - b) Create offerings that might allow Spanish to contribute more directly to North American Studies
  - c) Investigate the potential of Alumni trips abroad - how could Languages & Literatures contribute
  - d) Establish a bridge with the Faculty of Education, including reinvestigating a previous project of automatic entrance to teacher's college with a BA in French, and/or the possibility of concurrent education between the two faculties

### **Unit Response**

The Unit Response was authored by the Chair of the Department of Languages and Literatures, Nathalie Freidel, with input from faculty members. The response thanks the reviewers for the time and effort put into the review

and notes that the review process brought a sense of collegiality to the department. The external reviewers were described as approachable and the resulting report as accurate and constructive.

The department noted a few minor corrections to the reviewers' report which impacted their response to those recommendations. For each recommendation, the department indicated if they agreed with it or not, gave detailed examples of any actions already taken place toward implementation, future steps that could or would be taken, and noted where the implementation of a recommendation required collaboration with the Faculty of Arts. The Unit Response concludes by reiterating the usefulness of the reviewers' report and recommendations and indicates that they look forward to implementing them in their programs, curriculum and practices.

## B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS

1. The Department employs innovative teaching methods involving active learning.
2. There is a wide diversity of course offerings available to students.
3. Members of the Department demonstrate a deep commitment to the unit and to the quality of education provided to students.

## C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

1. There needs to be a continued evaluation of shared offerings with the University of Waterloo.
2. Timetable scheduling could be arranged more effectively to avoid overlapping courses.

## D) PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In its Unit Response the Department notes two significant corrections connected to specific recommendations. **Recommendation 8** suggests that the language lab is no longer in operation, and that it will be lost when the Department changes locations. But the unit observes that the lab continues to be used, and that shared lab space will be available with the Film Studies program when Languages and Literatures is moved to the Peter's Building. **Recommendation 9** states the unit lost a ½ a position of administrative support, and that "faculty provide some office coverage when the administrative assistant is on holiday." The department observes that both of these assertions are mistaken. These two recommendations, therefore, do not appear in the prioritization list.

**Recommendation #1: To build on the strength of Community Service Learning, the committee recommends the unit seek ways to formalise and integrate experiential learning into a free-standing course available to the varied language major and minors pursuing studies with Language and Literatures.** The department agrees with this recommendation and will work with CSL in order to create the course. At this point the department considers the class would be best placed at the second-year level. The Dean concurs with this approach.

**Recommendation #2: The committee recommends that the Department identify in a more systematic way the manners in which communication skills are fostered on campus and in the community. These activities**

**could then be more directly highlighted, celebrated, and publicized.** The Department recognizes the validity of this recommendation, and lists several examples of ways in which it already fulfills its suggestions. The Dean is pleased to acknowledge the Department's continuing efforts to raise the profile of its offerings.

**Recommendation #3: Some students and faculty who met with the committee indicated dissatisfaction with the need, in some instances, for students to take courses at the University of Waterloo to complete program requirements. The committee suggests exploring the possibility of rotating campuses where courses are offered....Continued improvement in course coordination between the two universities and communication with students as to availability and registration processes might alleviate some of this dissatisfaction.** The Department states reservations about this recommendation, since it sees definite benefits achieved through shared resources with the University of Waterloo. The Dean concurs with the Department that such linkages are important, and will probably become increasingly significant in times of budgetary restraint when units will need to be creative about program delivery. The Department agrees, however, that increased communication and coordination between the two universities would produce positive results.

**Recommendation #4: Languages and Literatures could continue to develop Online learning courses, with a more strategic focus targeting non-traditional learners. Languages and Literatures could explore the possibility of an Online Learning certificate for language-related topics for those in business...or as a value-added component of an undergrad degree. Before pursuing this, the department should review what is offered on line at UW and at Conestoga College, so as to avoid redundancy.** The Department accepts the possibility of strategically enhancing its online offerings. This will need to be part of a coordinated effort across the Faculty of Arts to determine the most effective and efficient delivery of distance learning under the RCM budget model. The Dean will work with all departments in the Faculty to develop a coherent approach to this issue.

**Recommendation #5: In dealing with high course caps, the possibility of better managing filters was mentioned, in particular, find a way to better communicate enrollment issues to majors and minors so they enroll in the courses before registration filters are lifted. Additionally, some students...identified scheduling overlap in the timetabling of courses within the department. The committee acknowledges that some scheduling issues may be well beyond the control of the department, but to the degree that it is possible to avoid course conflicts and to effectively communicate with students regarding course registration processes, the department is encouraged to do so.** The Department recognizes that managing course filters is an ongoing challenge, but it will continue to adjust this process as needed. The move to a centralized timetabling system has modified departmental control of scheduling, as noted by the unit, but the Dean would urge that the 25% discretionary assignment of course time slots provided by the Registrar's Office be used judiciously to ensure that course conflicts be avoided within the Department. The Dean's Office would be pleased to provide any support that would be helpful in coordinating scheduling both within the Department and between it and other departments/programs.

**Recommendation #6: In order to standardize assessment, the committee suggests refining learning outcomes to demonstrate language level according to the Common Framework of Reference for Languages.** The Department accepts this recommendation and will add this information to syllabi, course descriptions, and the unit's website. The Dean concurs with this specific identification of an identified standard of assessment.

**Recommendation #7:** As the university transitions to its new budget model, Languages and Literatures should work closely with the Office of the Dean of Arts to carefully monitor the benefits and costs associated with Laurier students taking courses, required to complete programs, at UW. In some instances, cross-university cooperation in the delivery of program requirements might make good curricular sense. This motivation will need to be balanced against apparent student reticence to take courses even at a neighboring university and potential fiscal implications. As noted in the response to Recommendation #3, ongoing linkages with the University of Waterloo for both course and program provision will need to be considered strategically. The Department accepts the requirement to monitor this relationship, and agrees to work with the Dean's Office to ensure that it remains sustainable under the RCM budgeting model.

**Recommendation #10:** The undergraduate instructional Assistants the committee met with expressed a desire to have more information and more clarity in terminology and purpose of teaching they are involved in....The committee urges Languages & Literatures to be more consistent and explicit in its expectations and intent, both with the IAs and the students enrolled in the classes....Perhaps a partnership for training and teaching advice throughout the term could be established with the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence. The Department observes that it provides a workshop at the beginning of the academic year where the role of IAs is clearly delineated, and the unit feels that it is consistent in presenting what that role entails. It is also willing, however, to extend support for the IAs throughout the year, and will discuss the possibility of creating a "contract" for the assistants that will define their responsibilities. A course on "Language teaching: Reflection and Practice" has been approved by the Department, and could be made mandatory of IAs. The Dean agrees that these efforts to address the External Review's recommendation are reasonable.

**Recommendation #11a:** Create offerings that would allow business students (even those not interested in international business) to become more aware of cultural differences that must be address in the business world. The Department notes that there is a joint initiative between the Faculty of Arts and the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics to develop packages of Arts courses for business students. The Chair of Languages and Literatures, Dr. Nathalie Freidel, is a member of the DAC subcommittee charged with generating the first draft if this initiative, so the Department will be well-represented as it moves forward.

**Recommendation #11b:** Create offerings that might allow Spanish to contribute more directly to North American Studies. The Department is willing to explore the possibility of cross-listed classes with North American studies, for which there is some precedent in the past. The Dean observes that this form of sharing resources may become increasingly necessary under current budgetary conditions.

**Recommendation #11c:** Investigate the potential of how Languages & Literatures could contribute to Alumni trips abroad. Although the Department did not provide a response to this recommendation, addressing it would require the involvement of both the Office of the Dean of Arts and the Department of Development and Alumni Relations.

**Recommendation #11d:** Establish a bridge with the Faculty of Education, including reinvestigating a previous project of automatic entrance to teacher's college with a B.A. in French, and/or the possibility of concurrent education between the two faculties. The Department notes that discussions have occurred with the Faculty of Education to achieve this recommendation, and the Dean notes that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed to this effect for French.



**SIGNATURES**

Richard Nemesvari

April 6, 2017



Kathryn Carter

April 6, 2017



Paul Jessop

April 18, 2017



## PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
<p>Recommendation #1: To build on the strength of Community Service Learning, the committee recommends the unit seek ways to formalise and integrate experiential learning into a free-standing course available to the varied language major and minors pursuing studies with Language and Literatures.</p>	<p>Department</p>	<p>September, 2018</p>	
<p>Recommendation #3: Some students and faculty who met with the committee indicated dissatisfaction with the need, in some instances, for students to take courses at the University of Waterloo to complete program requirements. The committee suggests exploring the possibility of rotating campuses where courses are offered....Continued improvement in course coordination between the two universities and communication with students as to availability and registration processes might alleviate some of this dissatisfaction.</p>	<p>Chair, Department, Dean of Arts</p>	<p>Ongoing – to be reviewed yearly</p>	<p>Since this recommendation requires a continuing evaluation of the Department’s relationship with the University of Waterloo it will need to be revisited on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Recommendation #4: Languages and Literatures could continue to develop Online learning courses, with a more strategic focus targeting non-traditional learners. Languages and Literatures could explore the possibility of an Online Learning certificate for language-related topics for those in business...or as a value-added component of an undergrad degree. Before pursuing</p>	<p>Department, Dean of Arts</p>	<p>On-going – to be reviewed yearly</p>	<p>Since this recommendation requires coordination between the Department and the overall on-line strategy of the Faculty of Arts it will need to be revisited on a regular basis.</p>

<p>this, the department should review what is offered on line at UW and at Conestoga College, so as to avoid redundancy.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #5: In dealing with high course caps, the possibility of better managing filters was mentioned, in particular, find a way to better communicate enrollment issues to majors and minors so they enroll in the courses before registration filters are lifted. Additionally, some students...identified scheduling overlap in the timetabling of courses within the department. The committee acknowledges that some scheduling issues may be well beyond the control of the department, but to the degree that it is possible to avoid course conflicts and to effectively communicate with students regarding course registration processes, the department is encouraged to do so.</p>	<p>Chair, Department</p>	<p>September 2018</p>	
<p>Recommendation #6: In order to standardize assessment, the committee suggests refining learning outcomes to demonstrate language level according to the Common Framework of Reference for Languages.</p>	<p>Department</p>	<p>September 2017</p>	
<p>Recommendation #7: As the university transitions to its new budget model, Languages and Literatures should work closely with the Office of the Dean of Arts to carefully monitor the benefits and costs associated with Laurier students taking courses, required to complete programs, at UW. In some instances, cross-university cooperation in the delivery of program requirements might make good curricular sense. This motivation will need to be balanced against apparent student reticence to take courses even at a neighboring university and</p>	<p>Chair, Department, Dean of Arts</p>	<p>On-going – to be reviewed yearly</p>	<p>Since this recommendation requires a continuing evaluation of the Department's relationship with the University of Waterloo it will need to be revisited on a regular basis.</p>

potential fiscal implications.			
Recommendation #10: The undergraduate instructional Assistants the committee met with expressed a desire to have more information and more clarity in terminology and purpose of teaching they are involved in....The committee urges Languages & Literatures to be more consistent and explicit in its expectations and intent, both with the IAs and the students enrolled in the classes....Perhaps a partnership for training and teaching advice throughout the term could be established with the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence.	Chair, Department	September 2018	
Recommendation #11a: Create offerings that would allow business students (even those not interested in international business) to become more aware of cultural differences that must be address in the business world.	Chair, Department, Dean of Arts, DAC Subcommittee	September 2018	Since this recommendation connects to a wider FoA and LSBE initiative, it cannot be implemented solely by the Department.
Recommendation #11b: Create offerings that might allow Spanish to contribute more directly to North American Studies.	Department	September 2018	
Recommendation #11c: Investigate the potential of how Languages & Literatures could contribute to Alumni trips abroad.	Chair, Department, Dean of Arts, Alumni Relations	September 2018	