

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

French M.A.

Date of Review: April 6 – 7, 2017

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the M.A in French. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

The French program submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies February 2017. The self-study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, and program data including the data collected from a student survey along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appended were the CVs for each full-time faculty member in the Department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean of the Faculty and selected by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on April 6th and 7th, 2017. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of the Faculty, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current students, faculty and support staff.

Strengths

The reviewers note the “very high satisfaction levels among its students”, the strength and innovative focus of the curriculum and diverse research activities which challenge and offer to students opportunities to enhance their learning of French/Francophone cultures and literatures while deepening their professional capacity. The program was grateful for the Consultants’ high praise for our M.A. program’s 100% completion rate.

Here are other specific strengths of the program, highlighted in the report:

1. Diversity in the curriculum: various theoretical approaches (post-colonialism, psychoanalysis, queer theory, reader-response theory, Indigenous studies, women's studies, structuralism and poststructuralism, among others), and diverse reading materials from the francophone world (France, French-Canada and Quebec, the Caribbean, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia).
2. Interdisciplinarity in literary studies (interconnections between literature and animal studies, science, arts, philosophy, among others).
3. FRENCH 705 — Introduction to Literary and Critical Theory: innovative, team-taught course in theory, textual analysis and research methods.
4. Career training (in accordance with the guidelines of the Tri-Agency and the OCGS Taskforce on Professional Skills): organizing special events and workshops, advising M.A. students in terms of scholarship and grant writing, encouraging publications and participation in conferences, and building relationships between graduate students and MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching.
5. Annual graduate students colloquium creating a space to present progress and results of their current research, share conclusions and practice professional skills.
6. Research, technological and pedagogical resources (an excellent French collection at Mills Library, the Lyons New Media Centre, the Lewis and Ruth Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship, the MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching).
7. Quality of mentoring and training, as well as of the supervision of Teaching Assistants provided by dedicated Faculty members.
8. Inclusive system of governance.

- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**

In their report, the Reviewers identified areas for enhancement of improvement:

1. Hiring new Faculty members to compensate for retirements and thus to allow for offering more elective courses.
2. Expanding the use of technology in teaching.
3. Introducing more formative and less summative assessments of graduate students' work.
4. Providing greater funding for international students.

5. Providing M.A. students with access not only to teaching assistantship but also to research assistantship opportunities

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
<p>Senior Administration Support for Departmental Mission and Faculty Resourcing</p>	<p>External reviewers acknowledged the key role the Department of French plays not only at the university but also as a French presence in a <i>designated</i> city required to offer services in French. Whereas it is at times a challenge to have the second official language given its due place within the university, it is often more difficult to do so with a reduction of close to 50% in faculty resources and this within the last three years. As the reviewers themselves noted, since 2014-15 the Department has been “drastically” reduced and is in need of new tenure-stream faculty or hires (p. 8, 10, 14). The Department has been very mindful of succession planning, and it has reinvented itself at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and we have strengthened both our mission and our focus. We now need senior administrative support to allow the Department to address effectively the following recommendations.</p> <p>a) Heavy workload. External consultants affirmed that our 15-unit workload contrasts with 12 units in the majority of other French Departments of Ontarian Universities, all of whom recognize the French as a Second Language (FSL) factor. They also acknowledged the additional faculty contribution to the very successful team-taught course</p>	<p>Chair of the Department</p>	<p>2017-2020</p>

	<p>(FRENCH 705) for which we receive no credit.</p> <p>b) Faculty Research Activities and Community Outreach. The Department has excellent faculty and many would like to contribute to community organizations and build strong ties with Francophone West African, Vietnamese and Indigenous communities, while others would like to contribute to research institutes and interdisciplinary programs at the University. With all hands on deck strictly to mount our required courses, these opportunities have had to be set aside.</p> <p>c) Course electivity. The Department is acutely aware of our graduate students' strong request for more electives. It is their major complaint. Cognizant of the budgetary situation, we have introduced more undergraduate/graduate courses but this formula is limited by SGS and it doesn't appeal to our Master and PhD students who wish for a more robust graduate experience. A new hire would enrich our curricular offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels.</p> <p>Building on our strengths and strategic focus on French/Francophone literatures and cultures and cultural diversity, the Department will continue to request hires in the following fields in order to address the gaps in our graduate and undergraduate curricula: French Literature (from Medieval to 19th Century); French/Francophone Cultural Studies and Teaching French as a Second Language. In response to greater collaboration with other Departments and Institutes across the Faculty, we see potential with the</p>		
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	Department of English and Cultural Studies. We share many common interests in the areas of World Literatures (African, Asian and Caribbean), Indigenous literature, as well as European literatures written in French/English. Greater cross-disciplinary institutional structure that would encourage more interaction would not only be unique in Canada, but it would also send a very clear message that McMaster University not only recognizes bilingualism but also truly embraces cultural diversity within its community and beyond.		
Curricular Improvements and Enhancements	<p>a) Major Research Paper (MRP) length: The Department of French is willing to increase the number of pages for our MRP requirement from 25-35 to 35-45 as this reflects our current practice in many cases.</p> <p>b) Assessments: We appreciate the External Consultants' interview with students and the suggestion that we place more weight on formative assessments rather than summative assessments. Given its importance for students, we shall include this issue at our Departmental meetings and retreat. We shall consult best practices and find ways to ensure a proper balance.</p> <p>c) Technology: The Department will look at diversifying and increasing our use of technology.</p> <p>d) Website: We plan to work on updating and improving our website within the next academic year.</p>	Chair of the Department and Chair of Graduate Studies, with the participation of Faculty Members and Graduate Student Partners (the second phase of the Student Partners Program sponsored by the MacPherson Institute).	starting in September 2017, with the goal of introducing changes into 2018-2019 curriculum.
Graduate Recruitment, Professionalization and	a) French Liaison Officer: The Department is exploring the possibility of a French/Francophone liaison officer in	Chair of the Department and Chair of Graduate	2017-2019

<p>Space</p>	<p>order to develop stronger links with a host of schools, government and community organizations as well as improve our recruitment venues.</p> <p>b) Graduate Colloquium: We shall continue to build on this “great strength” and welcome the participation of graduate students from neighbouring universities. We shall work with SGS and the Faculty to increase financial support for student travel and the invitation of eminent scholars and writers to our Distinguished Guest Speakers Series.</p> <p>c) Graduate Space: Although we have lost a seminar room (TSH 501), upgraded with donor funding, we are pleased to see that our only remaining graduate seminar room (TSH 530) is being upgraded to add modern technology and new furniture. We are hopeful that a quieter heating/air conditioning unit can be installed in order to resolve the annoyance felt by everyone who utilizes this room. The External Consultants were pleased to hear that our Departmental library, currently used by our Graduate Students for their office hours, their oral defense, Club de français meetings, among others, would remain within the Department. However, this is no longer the case and it has been designated as a shared space. The Department will follow the recommendations of the External Consultants to see if any space in the Wilson Building can be made available to our graduate students, given that the university received warm support from the Deputy Minister of Francophone Affairs for the funding of the</p>	<p>Studies</p>	
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	Wilson Building.		
Research and Travel Funding & Related Opportunities	<p>a) Funding support to enhance recruitment. We concur with the External Consultants' recommendation that the Department would benefit from more funding support to attract strong candidates who might not only garner scholarships and awards but also consider applying for our doctoral program.</p> <p>b) International Scholarships, Bursaries and Awards for the French Graduate program. Additional funding for <i>international students</i> from SGS or other Offices (Research or Provost) would be greatly welcome all the more so because the Department receives many applications from West Africa and these students often require more financial support. With such an investment, the reputational gain of the institution would be seen over time.</p> <p>c) M.A. Research Assistantships. We welcome this suggestion and hope that there is funding available to offer these opportunities to our graduate students.</p>	Chair of the Department and Chair of Graduate Studies	2017 – 2019
Departmental Structure	The Department is keen on creating an Academic Planning Committee, the terms of which will focus on strategic planning, hiring, budgets and fundraising. Plans are already underway to draft the terms of this Committee and discuss them at our next Departmental Retreat and meetings, so that we can implement it as early as next year.	Chair of the Department	2017 - 2018

Dean's Response, Faculty of Humanities

The review team clearly identify the core strengths of the program, particularly the high quality of the student experience, and the commitment of faculty members. The Dean supported the response of faculty members in the Department.

He added one comment about the Department's response. The Department focuses a little too much of its response on the need for additional tenure track faculty hires. In his reading of the report, the reviewers actually do not make such a recommendation, although they are concerned about future retirements. They do note the dramatic loss of faculty complement and some its impact. In terms of the graduate program, the reviewers note that the current supervisory assignment per faculty member is sustainable, and might even allow for some growth of the graduate program.

The Dean would not be so concerned with the focus on hiring, except that he would hope the Department would consider some other suggestions made by the reviewers for dealing with the current faculty complement:

1. That the Department offer more 600 level seminars to students, to offer students more choice. Any limit set by SGS focuses only on the proportion of courses that students can take as part of their degree, not the number that the Department can offer. The Department has small undergraduate and graduate enrolments: other Departments offer many of their fourth year/MA seminars in this format, so as to give students at both levels more choice. As it stands, my understanding is that the Department has created only two 600-level courses, neither of which appears to be on offer in 2017-18.
2. That the Department explore collaborations with other Departments in the area that have small graduate programs, to look for potential opportunities to share supervisory resources in a reciprocal manner. Other Departments have at least involved individual faculty members from other institutions in their graduate programs.
3. That the Department explore collaborations with Linguistics and Languages, in the hopes of supporting a visiting professor or even a cross appointment in applied French linguistics.

The Department has been responding effectively to the review of its undergraduate programs, and the Dean looked forward to working with them to enhance their high quality MA program.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendations

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.