

TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: August 8, 2013

FROM: Robert A. Boudreau
Chair, University Review Committee

RE: Department of Modern Languages, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the University Review Committee approved the review of the Department of Modern Languages at its June 25, 2013 meeting.

The Program Review Committee for this review was comprised of Beth Gerwin (Program Review Coordinator), Tim Pope, Inge Genée, Abigail McMeekin, and Omar Rodriguez. The review produced four documents:¹

1. *Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Lethbridge: Academic Quality Assurance Review, 2012-13, Self-Study Report* (received February 9, 2013) - self-study report developed by the Department of Modern Languages Self Study Committee.
2. *External Review Report, Department of Modern Languages, University of Lethbridge* (received March 28, 2013) - External Review Report by Glenn Moulaison (University of Winnipeg) and Marjorie Ratcliffe (Western University), based on their site visit of March 7-8, 2013.
3. *Modern Languages Quality Assurance Review: Program Response to the Self Study Report and the External Review Report* (received May 22, 2013) - response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. *Programme Review - Department of Modern Languages* (received June 23, 2013) - response to the review, written by Chris Nicol, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

¹ All documents are available upon request.

Self Study

The Self Study found several main themes upon which the Self Study Committee sought feedback from external reviewers:

- **The role of Modern Languages in combined degrees** – There is a perceived lack of coherence between the B.A. and B.Ed. parts of the combined B.A./B.Ed program. In the final years of the program, students are challenged by the need to take upper-level language courses while completing teaching practicum requirements. In the B.A./B.Mgt., students in the International Management Major struggle with the required language courses and enrolment has declined in this program.
- **Continuity of programming, especially at upper levels** – Suitable follow-up courses are not always available from one semester to another. Possible solutions include: pooling resources with other departments; coordinating upper-level offerings; and relaxing target language course requirements.
- **Differences in student preparation** – Intermediate level classes often have students with very different levels of language fluency.
- **Use of language labs** – The efficient use of assigned language lab hours continues to be a challenge.
- **Teaching in the target language** – The department is discussing relaxing or abandoning the requirement that all courses with a designated language course code be taught in the target language. This is done in other institutions to offer Master's-level language courses.
- **Master's program** – The department is considering offering a coherent Master's program, perhaps interdisciplinary in nature.
- **Diversification vs. concentration** – There is an ongoing tension between the goal to offer courses in many modern languages and the need to ensure there is the ability to cover languages with sufficient depth. German, Japanese, and Linguistics rely on a single faculty member.

External Review

The External Review Report made the following general observations and comments:

- The department is aligned well with the strategic directions of the U of L. The study of languages is at the core of liberal education, plus it prepares students for a more globalized world.
- The department functions as a “federation of independent mini departments,” but the department's Curriculum Committee functions well because the four language programs are similar in design.
- One Associate Professor and one Full Professor (the only one in the department of that rank) are scheduled to retire in the next couple of years. This will emphasize the “junior” profile of the department's faculty members.
- From 2007 to 2012, Majors have decreased slightly, and Minors have increased dramatically. Graduation rates are respectable.
- Current students generally like their Modern Languages program and graduates do well.
- Advising about Modern Language is lacking for students in other programs.

The report made the following main recommendations:

- Reduce the faculty member workloads to match the average level of others in the Faculty of Arts and Science so that they can reach their research potential. Faculty members have to undertake administrative tasks, and have a diminishing amount of time to dedicate to research and scholarship. Suggestions to facilitate a workload reduction include: teach breadth courses in English that complement the faculty members' expertise and the students' needs and interests; and attract more unilingual students to the study of languages, literatures, and linguistics.
- Implement ways of accommodating current language students and High School students in a changing environment.
- Ensure Modern Languages faculty members are the gatekeepers of language competency requirements for other faculties.
- Partitioning (reserving classroom seats for potential students from other faculties, who may or may not register) is untenable.
- Ensure students who study abroad do not study in English.
- Clarify why students are limited in the number of courses they can take outside their home faculty or department.
- Clarify the reason behind the vetoing of the cross-listing of courses.
- Set entrance placement tests that allow students to enter the university from a variety of secondary schools and give credit for work done at the university. Consider having advanced placement for students who do exceptionally well on these tests. Exit tests could be implemented as a measure of the standards students have reached.
- Consider designing courses that are of wider interest to students and allow for bigger classes taught in English. These could be team taught. For example, "The Development of the Languages of the World," or "Literatures of the World."
- Consider team teaching a course, "Introduction to the Study of World Literature," that is compulsory for all Modern Languages students.
- Consider developing a course on translation and translation theory for combined French and Spanish Majors.
- Consider planning conversation courses that could incorporate experiential learning and community service learning.
- Consider developing courses more attractive to Education and Management students, like "Business Japanese," or "French for Teachers."
- Fill the current faculty member vacancy in French immediately, and the pending retirement in German.
- The planned 2014 Minor in Asian Studies could require another faculty position in Japanese.
- Develop a three or six year plan for major curriculum changes that takes into account study leaves, parental leaves, illnesses, research related absences, administrative duties, and so on.

Program Response

In its Program Response to the External Review Report, the Self Study Committee categorized the review's recommendations and provided its response:

External Review Report Recommendations:	Self Study Committee Response:
1. Hire additional faculty to replace departing faculty members and support anticipated program growth.	<p>The committee is aware of this need, more pressing since French will lose two faculty members and the German professor will retire in Fall 2014.</p> <p>The hiring priorities for the department are: (1) to replace the anticipated faculty member losses; (2) new hires to handle more program offerings and address teaching loads; and (3) sessional instructors, needed to support all areas.</p> <p>The suggestion to allow sessionals to teach more than two courses a year is a Handbook matter that will have to be addressed through ULFA.</p>
2. Improve teaching innovation and scholarly output, currently limited by comparatively heavy teaching and administrative duties.	<p>Additional hires would help redistribute teaching loads.</p> <p>The department has begun discussions on other ways of freeing time for teaching development and scholarly work. These methods include: team teaching of larger English courses; increasing class sizes of lower-level language courses; and rotating topics for upper-level series courses to reduce preparation time.</p>
3. Clarify standards of competency, course scheduling for combined degrees, and partitioning.	<p>Communication between the department and the faculties with which it runs combined degrees could be improved. The department should meet with Deans and colleagues in Education and Management to discuss how program requirements and course schedules can be developed collaboratively and better communicated.</p>
4. Consider using a placement test to establish the lowest level course for which a student can receive credit.	<p>The committee agrees. The department has been working to improve the placement tests to make them into online pre-registration tests. It will seek support for developing and implement advanced placement tests.</p>

**External Review Report
Recommendations:**

Self Study Committee Response:

5. Teach courses in English to increase enrolment.

The committee realizes the advantages of English-language instruction. The department has begun discussions on how larger courses team-taught in English could produce a reduced teaching load. This would lead to major curricular changes, and so needs further discussion and consideration.

The department has also begun discussions on teaching upper-level courses in English. This could increase enrolment and open courses to more graduate students. These courses could also be good candidates for cross-listing.

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6. Reduce the redundancies in student advising.

Quality advising always takes time and expertise, but there are potential efficiencies. The department will: develop clearer placement policies through an online placement test; improve advising and information exchange with the faculties of Management and Education; improve communication with Arts and Science Advising about program requirements; and improve communication and record keeping with Arts and Science Admissions related to transfer credits or combined degrees.

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7. Develop and release multi-year plans of anticipated course rotations.

This is already done for Linguistics, and other sections agree with this recommendation. With a limited number of teaching staff, however, these plans will be subject to change.

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8. The department must be involved in any discussion of liberal education at the university

The committee agrees. Beginning July 2013, one department faculty member will be on the GFC GLER Committee.

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9. Revisit language lab use and investigate opportunities for students to do language conversation in less structured environments.

The department agrees that a dedicated conversation component could be phased into existing courses. However, oral components of language courses are difficult to assess. And so the department will have to investigate and gain consensus on assessment methods.

Dean's Response

In his response to the review findings, Dean of Arts and Science Chris Nicol noted that overall, with little likelihood of new positions or resources, the department will have to be creative in making the best use of its allocated resources.

There will be no new faculty hired in the foreseeable future, so adjusting teaching loads from the current five to four courses is not realistic. The anticipated vacant faculty positions may eventually be filled, but based on a rigorous demonstration of need. Using sessional lecturers to solve staffing constraints is not a viable option. The department must reorganize its curriculum so it can be delivered within the anticipated staffing constraints. The department must also consider the viability of its five disciplinary areas.

Regarding relationships with other units, there are two main issues. First, the lack of uniformity in academic standards in language instruction across the faculties that Modern Languages works with to deliver combined degrees (see also course scheduling for combined degrees). And second, the constraints of the enrolment partitioning system. Modern Languages will develop a comprehensive description of these issues, their consequences, and recommendations for addressing them, and will provide this to the Dean's office so that solutions can be found.

In considering enrolment capacity, using Academic Assistant 3 (Instructor) positions is an option to increase the department's ability to offer high-demand introductory courses.

Update

Due to several considerations, since the program review was closed in June 2013 the internal process for academic program suspension has been initiated for the Major in German and affected programs. As a consequence, some of the recommendations may no longer be appropriate.

The University Review Committee is satisfied that the Department of Modern Languages academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Robert A. Boudreau

Chair, University Review Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)