



French Studies

Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan August 2020

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Arts & Humanities
Degrees Offered	B.A.
Modules Reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honours Specialization in French Studies • Specialization in French Studies • Major in French Studies
External Consultants	Dr. Milo Sweedler, Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University Dr. Wladyslaw Cichocki, Professor, University of New Brunswick
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Renée Soulodre-La France, Professor, King’s University College at Western University
Date of Site Visit	August 11-12, 2020
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: January 20, 2021 SCAPA: February 3, 2021 Senate (for information only): February 12, 2021
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review – 2027-28

Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the undergraduate modules delivered by the **Department of French Studies, Faculty of Arts & Humanities.**

This report considers and reports on the following documents: the program’s self-study, the external consultants’ report and the responses from the Department and the Associate Dean of Science.

This Final Assessment Report (FAR):

- i) provides an Executive Summary of the Review Process, including an overview of the Department as outlined in the Self-Study brief;
- ii) identifies the strengths of the program;
- iii) identifies opportunities for program enhancement and improvement; and,
- iv) prioritizes the recommendations of the external consultants in the Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the Final Assessment Report that are required for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, outlines any action or follow-up that is required, and provides the timeline for completion.

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is sent for approval through SUPR-U, SCAPA, Senate and the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance and is made available on a publicly accessible location on Western’s IQAP website. The Final Assessment Report with the Implementation Plan is the only document resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program/School/Faculty and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary (as identified in the Self-Study Brief)¹

Overview

Approved 50 years ago in 1968, the current goals of the Department of French Studies align with the Academic Plan of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities (FAH) and focus on five pillars, including:

1. Innovation and Development
2. Increased Internationalization
3. Engaging Alumni/Engaging the Community
4. Building on Research Excellence
5. A Culture of Communication

There are 15 full-time faculty, 2 Fulltime Limited Term faculty along with many part-time instructors and graduate teaching assistants who *carry out research and teach courses in a wide range of fields, including language study, linguistics, and literature, history, culture and civilization of the French-speaking world.*

Faculty have been successful in holding external funding and winning university as well as external teaching and research awards. Faculty research supports the unit's mission of developing quality pedagogical practices. The unit *has maintained an environment and "ethos" of scholarly inquiry and curiosity-driven intellectual investigation, even in the face of increasing budgetary challenges.*

French Studies is very much an 'interfaculty' department and has links with other departments in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities (*i.e.*, Linguistics), the Faculty of Social Science, the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders and the Ivey School of Business. Many students outside of French Studies enrol in one or more courses in the Department to fulfill the breadth requirements of their degree program. In addition, several French courses are required courses for other programs such as Social Science, Business, and within other departments in Arts & Humanities.

The Department began reviewing its programs and curriculum in 2018 with the development of revised Learning Outcomes that align with both the FAH academic plan and the Western Degree Learning Outcomes. The curriculum for each course was then mapped to the Learning Outcomes, three of which provide the foundation to, and are common for all programs:

1. *Students shall be able to present their own learning outcomes effectively and with confidence, whether orally or in written form, using, as applicable, a variety of argumentative strategies and research tools.*
2. *Students will be able to use standard academic language with clarity and rigour.*

¹ Direct quotes from the review materials are noted in italics; otherwise, all comments are summarized.

3. *They shall, moreover, demonstrate intellectual integrity and ethical responsibility in their professional and personal lives in order to collaborate respectfully with their communities, exhibiting such qualities as self-direction, cooperation, civility and reliability.*

Pedagogically, faculty use an immersive French-language only teaching style in the classroom.

Going forward, the Department is focussed on increasing access to French Studies through online learning, internationalization, and new academic programs and initiatives.

Strengths/Innovations of the Program (as identified in the Self-Study brief)

- summer language programs at the French Immersion School in Trois-Pistoles
- annual Rwanda Summer experiential learning course
- annual production of the Departmental theatrical troupe, L'On Donne
- complement of Professional and Business French Courses (heavily subscribed to by students from professional programs)
- pedagogical innovations with introduction of new courses e.g., *French for Healthcare* and *French for the Media*
- development of online courses
- development of a Certificate in Business French
- multiple awards recognizing student
- Excellent library support

Challenges (as identified in the Self-Study Brief)

- Adjusting to budgetary constraints within the University and Faculty

Proposed Changes (as identified in the Self-Study Brief)

- Development of several new courses:
 - pre-university language courses (1000 level) to support student success in French Studies
 - general-interest, cultural studies course to be offered in English (1000 level) entitled *Unlocking Paris*
 - language pedagogy (2000 level) in Practical French
- Expanding experiential learning programs

Self-Study Process

The self-study of the department was a collective effort involving participation from all members of the Department of French Studies. Multiple faculty meetings were designated for the purposes of reviewing

the undergraduate program and resulted in the mapping of the curriculum to the Learning Outcomes as described above.

Data were also gathered from students through surveys and alumni to ascertain their insights into strength, challenges, and opportunities for future development for the Department. On the Student Exit Survey distributed to students at the end of 4th year, 96% indicated they would recommend studying French at Western to a friend. In the Appendices, the Department provides evidence of the satisfaction of students with the courses and instructors through the course evaluations.

Review Process

Because of the pandemic, onsite review was not possible and the external review occurred online through online (ZOOM) interviews with the following. During the external review, the review committee (comprised of the two external reviewers and one internal reviewer) were provided with Volumes I and II in advance of their visit and then met with the following over the course of the two days.

- Jeff Hutter, Vice Provost (Academic Programs)
- Margaret McGlynn, Vice Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Michael Milde, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Jan Plug, Associate Dean (Academic)
- John Nassichuk, Undergraduate Chair, Department of French Studies
- Karin Schwerdtner, Chair (Outgoing), Department of French Studies
- Jean Leclerc, Chair (Incoming), Department of French Studies
- Mirela Parau, Administrative Officer
- Robert Glushko Associate Chief Librarian
- Faculty, Department of French Studies
- Undergraduate students, Department of French Studies

Following the review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Chair and the Dean for review and response. These formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Faculty response, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of the French Studies undergraduate programs.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

While the review progressed as planned due to the limitations of the pandemic, in their external report, the external reviewers note frustrations with using online technology to conduct an undergraduate review with respect to unstable internet, limits of time in speaking with faculty and students, and specifically the lack of follow up one-on one conversations. That being said, they noted their appreciation for the collegial and welcoming atmosphere they experienced during the online review

process. They note that *overall the program reflects the mission, values, and strategies of both the University and the Faculty.*

Strengths of the Program

- Learning Outcomes align with the Western’s Strategic Plan and the FAH academic plan.
- Programs play a significant role in the promotion of French and official bilingualism in Canada
- Faculty make important contributions to cultural events and to the scientific literature in many areas of French Studies
- Recognized as one of the best French Departments in Canada

Challenges for the Program

- Diversify the curriculum to reflect current transformations in the field and changing student body
- Decline in budgetary context
- Declining student enrolment
- Gap in 20th Century and contemporary French Literature, specifically Québécois
- Student opportunity to practice oral French in class

Summary Statement

The program can be characterized as having an excellent culture of scholarship and research. It provides Western University students with a rich learning experience; indeed, students are studying in one of the best departments of its kind in Canada.

Reviewers’ Recommendations and Department/Faculty Responses

REVIEWERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS	DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
<p>1. <i>Change the following requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minor: 2.0 language courses, 1.0 core courses, 1.0 additional courses</i> • <i>Major: 2.0 language courses, 2.0 core courses, 2.0 additional courses</i> 	<p>“This amounts to a minor adjustment, a reduction of 0.5 core courses in the two modules. ...The departmental Undergraduate Program Committee shall certainly consider the merits of this suggestion.”</p>
<p>2. <i>That the University proceed quickly to negotiate a third-year abroad program with a French or francophone university to replace the now defunct Nice exchange program.</i></p>	<p>“...The Department has negotiated...a promising agreement with the Université d’Aix-en-Provence... Students may also avail themselves of the opportunities made available to them through the offices of Western International, including study-abroad possibilities at the Université de Tours, the Sciences-Po Summer School in Paris and the Ontario Rhône-Alps student exchange.”</p>

<p>3. <i>That the university administration look favourably upon requests from the Department for replacement positions and, if possible, at least one growth position.</i></p>	<p>“In a time of budgetary constraints on several fronts, the Department of French Studies looks forward to working constructively with the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.”</p> <p><u>Decanal response:</u> “Appointments are part of a larger budget and planning process at Western. ...The planning and budgeting cycle is approaching, and the Dean will be in conversation with all Department Chairs about their academic plans and the resources that will support those plans.”</p>
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Other Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

In their report, the external reviewers made a series of helpful suggestions to the Department for consideration.

REVIEWERS' SUGGESTIONS	DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
<p>1. <i>The Department should consider creating a performance course at the 4000 level.</i></p>	<p>“This interesting suggestion invites the department to consider building upon the success of FR 3906 (“Speaking Texts”) and, in so doing, enhancing the oral/communicative aspect of senior-level course offerings in French. This would also provide a useful academic complement to the extra-curricular, annual “L’On Donne” theatre activities.”</p>
<p>2. <i>While offering one or more service courses in English may achieve increased enrolments, courses in degree programs in French Studies need to be offered in the French language.</i></p>	<p>“...The importance of providing instruction in French is not in dispute in the Department of French Studies, at any level. Service courses (i.e. designed for students from other programs and other faculties i.e. not registered in a module in French Studies within Arts and Humanities) such as the new “Unlocking Paris” do provide an opportunity for non French-speaking students to fulfill a breadth requirement whilst exploring themes directly related to the research and teaching mission of the Department of French Studies...”</p>
<p>3. <i>The Department should seek out ways to give students more opportunity to express themselves orally at all levels of the curriculum, in all types of courses. This includes paying greater attention to a</i></p>	<p>“...We shall continue to integrate an oral component into core courses. Indeed, this very consideration remains top of mind at all curriculum of the Undergraduate Program Committee.”</p>

<p><i>communicative approach in 1000-level language courses.</i></p>	
<p>4. <i>The Department should avoid cutting 4000-level courses. These courses may have lower enrolments but they are of great benefit to Honours students.</i></p>	<p>“4000-level courses in the Department of French Studies are most often cross-listed with 3000-level courses and, for this reason, their lower enrolments pose less of a problem than might otherwise be the case. Instructors are careful to differentiate between the two groups of students working on a common corpus or set of problems, establishing appropriate requirements for all levels.”</p>
<p>5. <i>In the context of opportunities for experiential learning, the Department should consider having undergraduate students participate in some of the ongoing research projects in literature and linguistics.</i></p>	<p>“...Some progress has already been made on this front. A recent M.A. graduate was an <u>undergraduate</u> research hire in the Department two years ago...allowing for the engagement of undergraduate research assistants. In the last year, several contracts have been awarded to undergraduate students, a developing trend that we intend to encourage in the near future.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Affiliated University College Principal will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented in the Deans’ Annual Report and filed in the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic).

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>1. Change the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor: 2.0 language courses, 1.0 core courses, 1.0 additional courses • Major: 2.0 language courses, 2.0 core courses, 2.0 additional courses 	<p>That the departmental Undergraduate Program Committee consider these adjustments to the Minor and Major modules.</p>	<p>Department Undergraduate Program Committee and Chair</p>	<p>2022</p>
<p>2. That the University proceed quickly to negotiate a third-year abroad program with a French or francophone university to replace the now defunct Nice exchange program.</p>	<p>That the Department continue to pursue the agreement with the Université d’Aix-en-Provence so as to ensure its implementation.</p>	<p>Chair/Dean Arts and Humanities</p>	<p>Completed. Department has negotiated an agreement.</p>
<p>3. That the University administration look favourably upon requests from the Department for replacement positions and, if possible, at least one growth position.</p>	<p>That this recommendation be noted as the FAH goes through its budgetary process.</p>	<p>Chair/Dean Arts and Humanities</p>	<p>Ongoing as part of faculty planning process</p>