



**Department of Languages and Cultures
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan**

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Arts and Humanities
Degrees Offered	Bachelor of Arts (BA)
Modules Reviewed	<p>Honours Specialization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures <p>Specialization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish Languages and Hispanic Cultures <p>Major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German Language and Culture • Italian Language and Culture • Spanish
External Consultants	<p>James Skidmore, Director, Waterloo Centre for German Studies, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Jose Jouve-Martin, Director of Graduate Studies (Hispanic Studies), McGill University</p>
Internal Reviewer	Jeffrey Hutter, Associate Dean, Faculty of Science
Date of Site Visit	March 31 – April 1, 2021
Evaluation	Good Quality with Report in Two Years
Approval Dates	<p>SUPR-U: June 9, 2021</p> <p>SCAPA: September 8, 2021</p> <p>Senate (for information only): September 17, 2021</p>
Year of Next 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 Languages and Cultures** in the 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 Arts & Humanities.

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 and Faculty and SUPR-U.

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

Overview

The Department of Languages and Cultures (former Modern Languages and Literatures) ...integrates a variety of programs and research interests, offering students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels the opportunity to be immersed in a multicultural, multilingual, interdisciplinary and multifaceted research-intensive environment. Language learning is the portal to our programs, leading our students towards the ability to think, compare and understand the nature of language, cultures and literatures, and the different methodologies, old and new, that are used to research these areas.

With 12 full-time faculty, 4 full-time limited term faculty, and 5 limited duties instructors, it is a highly diverse department, integrating several different languages, cultures and comparative disciplines, including German, Italian, Spanish, Comparative Literature and Culture, Intercultural Communications and Digital Humanities. The faculty is committed to integrating its teaching and research, focussing on:

our tradition of leading our students to an in-depth exploration of cultures, literatures and languages; our belief in the importance in the modern world of the ability to think critically, to listen and read thoughtfully, to go beyond the surface; our recognition of the importance of transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, and working across different disciplines; our commitment to teaching students to communicate effectively and with elegance orally, in writing, and through modern media; our innovative approaches, not only to research and to teaching but also to responding to the globalized world we live in and the technological changes that surround us.

The Department's Learning Outcomes are consistent with Western's Strategic Plan and those of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. Student satisfaction with the various programs is high with student evaluations averaging 6.2 out of 7 annually.

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

- interdisciplinarity
 - flexible and committed faculty who teach across multiple programs
 - connections with other departments and faculties such as Digital Humanities, Visual Arts, Music, Theory & Criticism
- innovation in the integration of and smooth continuity between language and culture courses

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

- international service learning
- focus on diversity
- exceptional library support

Challenges (as identified in the Self-Study Brief)

- maintenance of breadth of program due to loss of 6 full-time faculty in the last four years and lack of faculty in Arabic language going forward

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

- none proposed at this time

Self-Study Process

The self-study of the department was a collective effort involving participation from all members of the Department of Languages and Cultures, including faculty, students, and administrative staff, coordinated by the Chair. Multiple faculty meetings and retreats were designated for the purposes of reviewing the undergraduate program and resulted in the mapping of the curriculum. 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.

Review Process

Because of the pandemic, onsite review was not possible and the external review occurred online through online (Zoom) interviews. 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.

- John Doerksen, Vice Provost (Academic Programs)
- Margaret McGlynn, Vice Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Michael Milde, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Tracy Isaacs, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts & Humanities
- Rafael Montano, Chair, Department of Languages & Cultures
- Ana Garcia-Allen, Undergraduate Chair
- Administrative Staff: Dawn Gingerich, Administrative Assistant; Ingrid Timusk, Undergraduate Assistant; Sylvia Kontra, Graduate Assistant

- David McCord, University Librarian, Collections & Content Strategies
- Faculty, Department of Languages & Cultures
- Limited Duties Faculty, Department of Languages & Cultures
- Undergraduate students, Department of Languages & Cultures

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 Languages and Cultures undergraduate programs.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

...This department is an asset for Western University... that serves both the university and its students well. We firmly believe that this Department has the potential to play a key role in the development of Western’s strategic goals, especially in terms of internationalization, study and promotion of social and cultural diversity, and student experience.

Strengths of the Program

- Alignment of programs with university’s strategic priorities
- Digital Humanities
- Interdisciplinarity
- Partnerships with other departments/faculties
- Student satisfaction with curriculum

Challenges for the Program

- Impact of decreasing enrolment in this and similar programs worldwide
- Number of diverse programs within the Department and resources
- Lack of undergraduate-led research initiatives
- Development and mapping of curriculum in all courses/programs to be consistent with Learning Outcomes
- Consistency of Learning Outcomes across all programs

Reviewers’ Recommendations and Department/Faculty Responses

The authors of this report acknowledge that the number of recommendations listed below is unusually large. This is partially explained by the complexity of the Department of Languages and Cultures, which is home to multiple programs and initiatives. ...We are convinced that this unit is an asset for the university and that it can make an even bigger contribution to Western University and its students.

REVIEWERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS	DECANAL RESPONSE (summary) <i>The Faculty is pleased to see the Department’s willingness, as indicated in its response, to work with very many of the recommendations from the external reviewers to renew and innovate in ways that will strengthen its capacity to serve its students while also attracting new students. We are more than willing to work with the Department to help it achieve these goals.</i>
	DEPARTMENT RESPONSE (summary)
1. That the Faculty and the University take an active role in facilitating the discussions taking place in the department on curriculum development including program retirements and new initiatives and that new resources be offered to the Department linked to initiatives clearly aligned with Western priorities.	Dept.: Curriculum development processes well established across university and the Department is part of the process with supports in place.
2. That the Department promote undergraduate research and use it to the benefit of the students and to promote the programs offered by the Department.	Dept.: Agreed; currently some opportunities, but could be developed further and will be discussed in future meetings
3. That the Department place Diversity and Public Humanities at the center of your curriculum, intellectual discussions, future academic strategies and possible hirings.	Dept.: Agreed; already some participation in Public Humanities and we will continue to contribute

<p>4. That the Department promote study abroad more aggressively as a fundamental part of your programs as a way to enrich the experience of your undergraduate students and enrich your programs.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed; will improve promotion of international opportunities</p>
<p>5. That the Department take this crisis [of too many programs and small faculty] as an opportunity to reimagine the teaching of Language and the Humanities in the 21st century rather than continuing a 20th-century model based on mutually exclusive national traditions.</p>	<p>Dept.: An important point and currently under discussion</p>
<p>6. That the Department prioritize those programs that (1) are attracting or have the potential to attract a significant number of students and/or (2) allow a large number of faculty members to collaborate with each other while at the same time working within their area of expertise.</p> <p>7. That Digital Humanities has significant potential for growth, and it would be an asset for this department if more faculty members contributed to it and were developed into a Major.</p>	<p>Dept.: Prioritizing such programs is under discussion, but prioritizing some programs could under-resource others</p>
<p>8. That the Department establish a committee on Teaching Practice so that (a) feedback can be shared, (b) best practices and ideas discussed and implemented in the department, (c) language courses can adopt common pedagogical strategies, (d) departmental instructors teaching these courses can develop a unified approach to language teaching, and (e) opportunities for community engaged learning can be more fully explored.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed and under discussion</p>

<p>9. That the Faculty and the University identify the areas in this Department that more closely align with Western’s strategic objectives and offer tenure-track replacements in those areas provided agreed-upon goals and targets are met.</p>	<p>Dept.: Currently involved in the development of Western’s new 5-year Strategic Plan</p>
<p>10. That the Department prioritizes Intercultural Communication with the possibility of offering a Major in Intercultural Communication with streams or specializations such as Germany and Central Europe, Italy and the Mediterranean World, and The Hispanic World.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed but not possible in near future</p>
<p>11. That the Department establish a partnership with the Library in order to establish a series of exhibitions highlighting the Library’s holdings on Italian, German, Spanish, Arabic, and Japanese (both in its general holdings and special collections).</p>	<p>Dept.: An excellent idea especially for International Week at Western</p>
<p>12. That the Department improve the Department’s website so that it effectively promotes the department’s undergraduate programs and that the website becomes an effective communication tool with which to interact with students, and not just a repository of information.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed</p>
<p>13. That the Department promote the CulturePlex Lab and engage undergraduate studies in research in digital humanities as a way to improve their learning experience and, indirectly, promote the Department’s undergraduate programs.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed</p>

<p>14. That full-time/tenured members of the Department team up with the Undergraduate Studies Coordinator to offer a more systematic approach to academic mentoring in order to improve the students' learning experience and promote the program at the same time.</p>	<p>Dept.: Will work toward improving academic mentoring</p>
<p>15. That the University and the Department should aim to reduce class sizes in language instruction if they wish to maintain the quality of instruction.</p>	<p>Dept.: While seemingly a good idea, this would be detrimental to other aspects of the Department</p>
<p>16. That the Department explore options whereby heritage learners won't inhibit the learning of non-heritage learners (e.g., by giving heritage learners experiential credit for running tutorial services, or by offering a course for heritage speakers that can be opened at the same time to advanced undergraduate students looking for a review of basic grammar and orthography rules, but that focuses on advanced oral and written production).</p>	<p>Dept.: Heritage speakers provide a valuable resource in courses but the Department will review how to mollify this concern</p>
<p>17. That the Department actively promote and showcase undergraduate research in the Department.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed; under discussion</p>
<p>18. That the Department review and strengthen undergraduate advising and mentoring as a way to reach out to students and increase program numbers.</p>	<p>Dept.: Agreed – as noted above</p>
<p>19. That the Department introduce entry point courses in English that showcase topics of interest to targeted groups of Western undergraduates and that can serve as a gateway to other courses offered by the Department.</p>	<p>Dept.: Not possible at this point with current faculty resources</p>

20. That the Faculty and the University explore ways in which the Department can receive greater recognition and credit for the work it does to provide courses to students from other Faculties at Western.	Dept.: Current processes are in place and consistent across the university
21. That the Department introduce in their language programs content relevant to students in the Social Sciences, Health Sciences, and Sciences in a proportion relative to their weight in the enrollments.	Dept.: Difficult to implement given the limited number of electives taken by non-program stud
22. That the university, the faculty, and the Department establish a working group charged with promotion.	Dept.: In progress

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 President 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
1. Place Diversity and Public Humanities at the center of curriculum, intellectual discussions, future academic strategies and possible hirings.	Contribute to the Public Humanities program as resources allow.	Department, Public Humanities program	ongoing
2. Promote study abroad more aggressively to enrich the experience of undergraduate students.	Promote the importance of study abroad in the classroom and on the departmental website.	Department	Spring 2022
3. Reimagine the teaching of Language and the Humanities in the 21st century rather than continuing a 20th-century model based on mutually exclusive national traditions.	Consider ways to gain efficiencies by offering some courses that serve multiple Majors.	Department	Spring 2022

4. Prioritize programs with the potential to attract greater numbers of students.	Seek ways to prioritize modules such as Intercultural Communications and Digital Humanities through Faculty-wide collaboration.	Department, Faculty	Spring 2023
5. Establish a committee on Teaching Practice to develop best practices and improve consistency across programs.	Form committee with representation from each language stream.	Department	Fall 2021
6. Increase visibility by promoting diversity.	Plan events for International Week.	Department	Fall 2021
7. Engage undergraduate students in research.	Promote integration of the CulturePlex Lab in programs.	Department, Faculty	Fall 2022
8. Improve student mentoring.	Involve more faculty in formal mentoring	Department	Spring 2022