

Final Assessment Report for the 2023-2024 Cyclical Review of the Language and Literatures Programs

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the programs in the Department of Languages and Literatures offered in the Faculty of Arts at the Waterloo campus, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the units' response, and the decanal response. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

The last cyclical program review for the undergraduate programs in the Department of Languages and Literatures took place as part of the 2016-2017 review cycle.

The Languages and Literatures Self-Study was authored by Dr. Jane Newland, Chair of the Department. Languages and Literatures faculty provided input through two department retreats in 2022 and 2023. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the Department also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, and the Dean of Arts prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on September 28, 2023, and a virtual site visit took place during the week of November 14-17, 2023.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Linda Quirke** from the Department of Sociology at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Odile Cisneros** from the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, and **Dr. Devika Vijayan** from the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Calgary. During the external review, the committee had virtual meetings with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Heidi Northwood, Provost and Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Jane Newland, Chair of the Department of Languages and Literatures
- Dr. Gavin Brockett, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts
- Full-time Faculty in the Department of Languages and Literatures
- Contract Teaching Faculty in the Department of Languages and Literatures
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Head of Collections and Acquisitions, and Ms. Pauline Dewan, Liaison Librarian
- Languages and Literatures program alumni
- Languages and Literatures current undergraduate students
- Ms. Marjana Bilandzic, Office Administration Coordinator
- Ms. Sally Heath, Manager: Academic Program Development and Review

The review committee submitted their completed report on January 23, 2024. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of the Department of Languages and Literatures took place virtually, with meetings on Zoom, November 14-17, 2023. The reviewers interviewed a number of stakeholders from the administration and the department (including faculty members, alumni, students, and staff) and received numerous documents, including the Self-Study and other enrolment data.

Admission to the Department of Languages and Literatures is governed by Wilfrid Laurier's general admission requirements. The GPA for admission is high and the committee notes that this practice certainly aligns with the goals of fostering excellent learning environments and exceptional outcomes.

The Committee was apprised of the course offerings of L&L. We would like to highlight courses like HBA in Languages, which gives students the ability to gain mastery of two languages and a working knowledge of a third. This program is of immense value as it prepares the students well to enter today's culturally and

linguistically diverse world and workplace. The introduction of an accredited three-work term co-op option for students in the HBA in Languages will further enhance these programs and place the Department of Languages and Literatures at the forefront of expanding experiential learning opportunities.

L&L has an outstanding and dedicated FT and contract faculty complement, including scholars in literature, cultural studies, film studies, and second-language acquisition. Faculty members complement each other in their expertise and skills to deliver three undergraduate programs and five minors. Faculty members are active researchers, hold competitive funding, and publish in peer-reviewed top venues. Several have won awards and serve in various capacities. Research and teaching are integrated.

The student community of L&L recognizes the hard work and dedication of their instructors. The current students of this department praised their faculty for their care and dedication to student learning. The student course evaluation data shows that the department means often surpassed Faculty and University means in all categories of the evaluation.

L&L has a set of strong features (CSL/EL; flexible programs; strong communities) and current and future opportunities that can attract students (Co-op in French; collaboration with Business and Education). The committee was particularly impressed with the energy that the Department devotes to innovation and to overcoming challenges. We also commend them for the strong community of scholars, students, and alumni that they have built.

Despite its many merits, we believe that the sustainability and continuous improvement of the program could benefit from the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 12 recommendations to improve the quality of the Languages and Literatures programs. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the department's response, and a response by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

Recommendation #1: L&L has already identified *africanité* as an under-represented research area. Recruiting a FT faculty member in this area would be a definite asset in achieving their diversity goals. If hiring new faculty members is not feasible in the current financial climate, introducing these topics in existing courses would seek to enhance alignment with those priorities.

Unit Response: The Department of Languages and Literatures concurs that a FT hire in the field of *africanité* would be very beneficial to our unit and would not only support our diversity efforts, but would also give us much needed faculty renewal.

We are confident that our new programming (BA in French with Teaching Option and BA in French/Languages with Co-op) will increase enrolments and by extension, our numbers of majors, which will in turn allow for such a hire. Please see the response to Recommendation #10 below for information about our increased number of applications this year.

In the meantime, we are grateful to the Dr. Pruteanu's research expertise, which straddles two different areas brought together by themes such as migration, alterity and Québec's unique geographical and linguistic situation on the American continent. As her main field of specialization deals with the body of migrant writing in France, Québec and France's former African colonies, Dr. Pruteanu regularly teaches FR238: *Francophone Culture*; FR338: *Francophone myths, legends and voodoo*; FR438: *Family feuds in Francophone literature* and therefore works with corpora and themes that engage with international and intercultural questions and address with the history of Africa's colonization. We integrate such topics into other courses as appropriate.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports the prioritization of the field of *africanité* when the opportunity arises to hire FT faculty for the department in the future.

Recommendation #2: Expanding Indigenous cultural content in courses dealing with the contexts of Francophone Canada and Latin America would be another step in enhancing diversity.

Unit Response: We already include appropriate Indigenous content throughout our course offerings. Currently, Indigenous content is included the following:

French: FR225, FR238, FR240, FR338, FR370, FR438. Both our core courses in French, FR290 and FR470, include Indigenous content to ensure that all majors have access to Indigenous content.

Spanish: SP228, SP265, SP266, SP321, SP408, SP465, and SP466. A Faculty member is currently working on a revamped version of SP328, which will also include Indigenous content. Additionally, we count on our joint agreement with the University of Waterloo to complement our Indigenous-content offerings. Two courses taught in English at the University of Waterloo have Indigenous content and count towards the Spanish major in combination: SPAN217 and SPAN400. Were the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Waterloo decide not to offer those courses anymore or not offer them on a regular basis, we welcome the opportunity to develop our own Indigenous-focused course in Spanish.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports current efforts to incorporate Indigenous content into existing courses and will continue to support initiatives along these lines.

Recommendation #3: A slight lowering of admission GPA to encourage applications.

Unit Response: This recommendation is outside of the department's control. We are open to further discussions with the Faculty of Arts as to the usefulness of such an approach.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts works with the Admissions Office to set admissions averages each year. We balance the need to recruit students with the imperative that incoming students have demonstrated skills and knowledge to succeed at their studies.

Recommendation #4: A reduction of class size to enhance student learning in language courses would be desirable. If this is not possible, smaller breakout sessions or tutorials (labs) supervised by advanced undergraduates (Instructional Assistants) could increase opportunities for sorely needed oral practice. Students should also be directed to other on and off campus opportunities for conversation.

Unit Response: In the Department of Languages and Literatures, 100 level language classes (AB101-2; FR101-2, GM110-11, IT101-2, SP101-2) are capped at 80. This is an unusually high cap within the sector, as language classes are typically limited in enrolment to allow for active student oral participation during class time. Under ideal circumstances, caps in these classes would be significantly lower. Student experience would be enhanced in these junior courses, if caps were to be reduced, but we are aware that in the current climate this is unlikely to happen. We are willing to keep these higher caps in these 100 level classes to offset our 40 caps in our 200 level language classes.

In response to budget constraints and student feedback highlighting the logistical/scheduling difficulties of additional tutorials, we have removed separate conversation classes/tutorials associated with language classes from our 100 and 200 level language courses. We remain conscious of the need for oral practice and ensure that all our language classes have dedicated class time for oral expression. We strive to create and promote additional opportunities for oral conversation such as: working with the Faculty of Education's trainee teacher candidates; international-at-home experiences pairing WLU students with international exchange students through Laurier International; French conversation circles at local libraries. Most recently, students in GM111 and GM210 have had the opportunity to participate in Laurier's Virtual Village project, meeting with German-speaking senior citizens in local Seniors' homes.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts is aware of the importance of small class sizes to facilitate effective language acquisition by students. We work with departments to balance this need with diminishing resources, and do our best to protect small class sizes. We recognize the creative efforts of colleagues in Languages & Literatures to deal with this challenging matter.

Recommendation #5: Offering online courses in Spring/ Summer term to alleviate lack of courses to fulfill requirements. Certain students may be advised to seek out other online opportunities from institutions such as Athabasca University. Transfer agreements could be set up for French and Spanish language courses.

Unit Response: As a department, we only have FR101-2OC, SP101-2OC and LL223OC as fully online courses. We routinely offer SP101OC in the Spring term. FR101-2 and SP012 used to be offered on a regular basis in the Spring terms, but have been on pause due to low enrolments. LL223OC is a new online course and will be offered for the first term in Winter 2025. This course could also potentially be offered in the Spring term.

It would be useful to the department and the wider university, with Brantford and the expansion to the Milton campus, to see the development of other fully online language courses in areas such as Italian or Arabic. Developing a course such as FR223: Early Modern France, FR234: A Century of Revolutions or FR235: 20th Century France as a fully online course would allow students at all campuses to pursue a minor in French more easily.

Online course development is controlled at a faculty level and OC course developments are costly. Our Undergraduate Advisor actively supports our students who need additional credits in the Spring term and helps with Cross registration at the University of Waterloo, Letters of Permission and assigning course equivalencies from other institutions. As we move to a Co-op structure, there will be a need for increased Spring/Summer term courses, LL supports the intentional way FOA is structuring this.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts currently works with eLearning to identify which courses might be given highest priority for online development, taking into account a range of factors. We will work with Languages & Literatures and do our best to help them develop those courses that they see as most useful to students in the coming years.

Recommendation #6: We suggest the rethinking of course titles to attract more students and content to cater to students (more hands-on, less literature-based). Courses in Spanish translation could attract more enrolments.

Unit Response: The department regularly revisits and updates its curriculum and makes changes to course titles on an on-going basis. Offering translation courses in Spanish would be redundant considering the nature of our joint agreement with the University of Waterloo, so we do not believe that this element of the recommendation needs to be implemented, and that it would be financially irresponsible of us to do so in the current budgetary climate. Currently, the University of Waterloo offers translation courses, following a progression: SPAN290, SPAN390, SPAN 395, and SPAN490. Were the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Waterloo decide not to offer those courses anymore or not offer them on a regular basis, we welcome the opportunity to develop our own translation courses in Spanish.

Our Spanish course offerings are essential to our unique BA in Languages. Following faculty retirements, we now only have 1.5 full-time Faculty members in Spanish. This means that course offerings are limited to faculty expertise and students do not have as much choice in their Spanish course selection as they would like. Increasing our Spanish faculty complement would allow us to offer a greater variety of courses and would have a positive impact on enrolment.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports the department's efforts to offer a variety of courses with creative titles given the limited resources available.

Recommendation #7: Reduce the number of assessments and streamline them, sharing resources and templates. Develop clear policies for missed assessments and obtain administrative assistance from central for student accommodations and CSL/EL activities. Students also suggested that administering language placement tests might also alleviate the differences in proficiency levels in the classroom, which may cause some issues.

Unit Response: Some years ago, the department administered proficiency tests for language placement but scrapped this approach due to the problem of advanced students purposefully failing the test to ensure placement in a lower-level and easier language class. We find our current triage system to be an efficient and effective way of placing students at the correct language level. Instructors address perceived differences of

language ability in class to ensure students understand that apparent fluency does not always translate into strong ability in all areas of language acquisition (speaking/writing etc.).

All our syllabi and course outlines contain clear policies regarding missed assessments and student accommodations. The number of assessments used in courses is up to the discretion of the instructor. The Chair reviews all syllabi before the start of each term following the Collective Agreement. As a department, we discuss quantity and types of assessments used regularly during Department in Council and Faculty retreats.

As we move forward with our CSL offerings, we see the need to stagger these courses at greater intervals to ensure the faculty running these courses do not become overwhelmed with the additional work such components create.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports the department's approach to incorporating CSL and working with students to ensure their success with non-traditional assignments.

Recommendation #8: Students also suggested that administering language placement tests might also alleviate the differences in level of proficiency in the classroom, which may cause some issues.

Unit Response: This recommendation has been addressed in response to Recommendation #7.

Decanal Response: As noted by the department, this recommendation is included in the response to Recommendation #7 and thus has not been prioritized.

Recommendation #9: Hiring of a part-time support staff to help with administrative matters to alleviate staff member and FT faculty workload.

Unit Response: We would welcome this recommendation to provide additional staff support especially during registration peak periods, but we understand, especially during times of budgetary restraint that the size of the department does not justify the implementation of this recommendation.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts does its best to provide adequate administrative support to all units at a time when resources are very tight. We appreciate the diligence and care taken by the Chair and Undergraduate Officer as well as the Administrative Assistant as they fulfill their duties.

Recommendation #10: Given that Spanish is part of three programs of the global importance of Spanish, a powerful argument for a hire in that area. L&L should be prepared for the possibility of the closing of one FT faculty line when a faculty member retires, and how that will affect the demand in other programs, especially the HBA in Languages program.

Unit Response: Faculty renewal remains a serious concern for the department. We have no junior faculty and future retirements will further impact our programs. We would like to reiterate the need for faculty hires within the department. Full-time faculty hires are essential for long-term planning. In the short term, a Limited Term Appointment would be welcome to help address gaps, in particular in Spanish.

We consider that a vibrant Languages and Literatures department, offering multiple languages both at introductory and higher levels is essential to Laurier's goal of internationalization. We consider that we are at the forefront of this strategy enabling students to become bi- and multilingual: acquiring enduring, life-long language skills and cultural awareness is crucial to our students becoming competent global citizens. Without adequate faculty renewal, the future of the department is at risk and with it the internationalization opportunities for students and the EDI goals to which the university aspires.

We are confident that with the introduction of Co-op and other new pathways (BA in French with Teaching Option; BA+MA pathway; BA+MBA Co-op), our enrolments will increase and that this will pave the way for faculty renewal both in French and in our other language areas in the near future. Indeed, we have already seen encouraging numbers in applications to our programs this year, as follows:

Program	Application numbers 2023	Application numbers 2024	% increase
BA in French	59	113	91%
BA in Languages	21	48	128%

We look forward to a high conversion rate on these applications and hope to welcome a strong cohort of students in Fall 2024.

Decanal Response: An increase in the number of majors will enable the Dean of Arts to make the case for future hiring of FT faculty in the area(s) that Languages and Literatures can demonstrate should be highest priority.

Recommendation #11: Clearly, L&L has a set of strong features (CSL/EL; flexible programs; strong communities) and current and future opportunities that can attract students (Co-op in French; collaboration with Business and Education) that should be clearly communicated to current and prospective students as compelling reasons to come to Laurier for Languages and Literatures. L&L needs to articulate and communicate a vision of their degrees that highlights these opportunities and features (especially hands-on experience), and that vision or brand should be front and centre of their recruitment efforts. A “branding” campaign (website, brochures, etc.) on the basis of the above has the potential to aid tremendously in recruitment efforts.

Unit Response: Since 2019, the Department of Languages and Literatures has been working hard to improve its outreach on our social media platforms. Our Instagram account is particularly successful, with almost 500 followers, including current students, instructors, student groups and organisations, local schools, alumni etc. On this platform, we regularly feature the highlights of our programs including:

- Student successes – awards; outstanding work;
- Alumni successes - diversity of career pathways;
- Course highlights – noteworthy CSL components; guest speakers; new courses;

- Department events – Meet the Profs, Open Forum presentations; Life after Laurier Alumni panels; Student Conferences;
- Faculty successes – publications; conferences; awards;
- International and International-at-home experiences – Explore; TAPIF; Tandem; Exchange through Laurier International;
- Further education drop ins/info sessions – MA courses; applying for teachers' college.

We find we are able to communicate our brand very successfully through this platform. Our official university outwards facing pages are a different matter, however. We have no control over these pages and cannot edit them in any way. We find these pages bland and lacking in detail. We would welcome the opportunity to speak to the Communication teams as to how to 'market' our programs more effectively on these pages.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts supports very much the creative, thoughtful and committed approach that Languages and Literatures takes to delivery of its programs.

Recommendation #12: Collectively draft and implement aggressive recruitment strategies. Recruitment should occur externally and internally: visits to high school campuses, distributing brochures, participation in Open House events, robust website and social media presence, participation in international education fairs geared toward Ontario as well as international students. One-on-one advising and announcements in large classes can help. Recruitment efforts should be beefed up in advance of application deadlines.

Unit Response: As a department, we provide regular support at our Open House events. We have updated our department brochures and recruitment documentation to reflect the changes in and the uniqueness of programs. As indicated in our response to Recommendation #12, we have a robust social media presence through our Instagram account, but do not have any control over our outward facing webpages. With recent changes in the Dean of Arts Office, there is greater and more effective liaison with Recruitment and Admissions. As a department, we are happy to continue liaising with such units to highlight the uniqueness of our programs further.

We welcome visits from local high schools and realise the need to visit local schools to enhance this outreach. In the past, we have organised a Think Languages Day to bring Grade 10 and 11 students onto campus to experience mini-lectures and taster language classes. We would like to see this event recur on an annual or biannual basis. As yet, this has been challenging to achieve due to pandemic restrictions.

Starting this year, 2023-2024, the Chair has visited 100 level French classes to highlight the value of and opportunities associated with continued language learning to a broader range of students. Moving forward, we will expand this initiative to large enrolment classes in other languages and areas.

Decanal Response: The Dean of Arts appreciates very much the commitment of Languages & Literatures to supporting recruitment efforts that include welcoming prospective students to campus and devoting considerable time to presenting an exciting future as students of foreign languages and literatures.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: Faculty creativity and commitment to student success that draws on extensive expertise as teachers and leading researchers in their fields. Despite increasing stress as a result of diminishing resources, colleagues in Languages and Literatures (L&L) continue to work hard to make this a valued and important Department. Students clearly appreciate the efforts of their professors and their willingness to invest in experiential learning of various sorts, and to incorporate increasingly diverse content into courses to support diversification and learning about indigeneity.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts: The Department will continue to manage with diminishing resources, and the Dean of Arts will do its best to support them at this challenging time.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Heidi Northwood

July 29, 2024



APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: September 19, 2024

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee: January 9, 2025

Submitted to Senate (for information): March 4, 2025

Implementation Report Due Date: March 4, 2027

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The following Implementation Plan was created by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts as part of the Decanal Response.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
Recommendation #1: L&L has already identified <i>africanité</i> as an under-represented research area. Recruiting a FT faculty member in this area would be a definite asset in achieving their diversity goals. If hiring new faculty members is not feasible in the current financial climate, introducing these topics in existing courses would seek to enhance alignment with those priorities.	Dean of Arts	Dean of Arts	2029	
Recommendation #2: Expanding Indigenous cultural content in courses dealing with the contexts of Francophone Canada and Latin America would be another step in enhancing diversity.	Department		Ongoing	
Recommendation #3: A slight lowering of admission GPA to encourage applications.	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	
Recommendation #4: A reduction of class size to enhance student learning in language courses would be desirable. If this is not possible, smaller breakout sessions or tutorials (labs) supervised by advanced	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	

undergraduates (Instructional Assistants) could increase opportunities for sorely needed oral practice. Students should also be directed to other on and off campus opportunities for conversation.				
Recommendation #5: Offering online courses in Spring/ Summer term to alleviate lack of courses to fulfill requirements. Certain students may be advised to seek out other online opportunities from institutions such as Athabasca University. Transfer agreements could be set up for French and Spanish language courses.	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	
Recommendation #6: We suggest the rethinking of course titles to attract more students and content to cater to students (more hands-on, less literature-based). Courses in Spanish translation could attract more enrolments.	Department		Ongoing	
Recommendation #7: Reduce the number of assessments and streamline them, sharing resources and templates. Develop clear policies for missed assessments and obtain administrative assistance from central for student accommodations and CSL/EL activities. Students also suggested that administering language placement tests	Department		2027	

might also alleviate the differences in proficiency levels in the classroom, which may cause some issues.				
Recommendation #8: Students also suggested that administering language placement tests might also alleviate the differences in level of proficiency in the classroom, which may cause some issues.	<i>This recommendation has not been prioritized.</i>			
Recommendation #9: Hiring of a part-time support staff to help with administrative matters to alleviate staff member and FT faculty workload.	Dean of Arts		Ongoing	
Recommendation #10: Given that Spanish is part of three programs of the global importance of Spanish, a powerful argument for a hire in that area. L&L should be prepared for the possibility of the closing of one FT faculty line when a faculty member retires, and how that will affect the demand in other programs, especially the HBA in Languages program.	Dean of Arts		2029	
Recommendation #11: Clearly, L&L has a set of strong features (CSL/EL; flexible programs; strong communities) and current and future opportunities that can attract students (Co-op in French; collaboration with Business and Education) that should be	Department		2026	

clearly communicated to current and prospective students as compelling reasons to come to Laurier for Languages and Literatures. L&L needs to articulate and communicate a vision of their degrees that highlights these opportunities and features (especially hands-on experience), and that vision or brand should be front and centre of their recruitment efforts. A “branding” campaign (website, brochures, etc.) on the basis of the above has the potential to aid tremendously in recruitment efforts.				
Recommendation #12: Collectively draft and implement aggressive recruitment strategies. Recruitment should occur externally and internally: visits to high school campuses, distributing brochures, participation in Open House events, robust website and social media presence, participation in international education fairs geared toward Ontario as well as international students. One-on-one advising and announcements in large classes can help. Recruitment efforts should be beefed up in advance of application deadlines.	Department		2026	