

Senate Committee on University Planning

Academic Unit Review Summary: DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

Site Visit	25 March 2013
Informal Response to Planning	20 June 2013
Formal Response to Planning	10 October 2013
Implementation Update	15 April 2015
Midterm Review	2016-17 (8-year cycle)

Summary of Departmental Self-Study: The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures was established in 1997 when the Department of French and Spanish merged with the Department of German. At present, the department has a faculty complement that includes eight tenured faculty, two sessional instructors, and two continuing part-time lecturers. The department offers programs in French Studies, German Studies, Hispanic Studies, Japanese Studies, and Linguistics. Majors and honours programs are offered within French and Spanish; an interdisciplinary modern languages, literatures and cultures program is offered (both major and honour), and minors are offered in German Studies and Japanese Studies, the latter being an interdisciplinary program with other academic departments. Over the period of 2004-2011, departmental enrolments have remained relatively steady.

The department prides itself on a dedication to excellence in teaching at the undergraduate level (members of the department have received the Crake teaching award, the Tucker teaching award, and Paul Pare awards), and active engagement in research and scholarly activities that have been supported by internal research grants and SSHRC awards. The department provides students with opportunities for language learning and cultural exchange through several study abroad programs. The curriculum in Modern Languages and Literatures provides for intensive study in the languages and cultures of French, Spanish, German, and Japanese. As well, programming in the Modern Languages and Literatures Department complements offerings in other departments, particularly in Music, Canadian Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and International Relations.

Summary of Program Review Report: The executive summary offers praise for faculty members' commitment to provide students with an optimal learning experience within and across the various language areas taught in the department. The reviewers are emphatic that this good department can become an even better department if it undertakes a careful review of its curriculum to find ways of "sharing courses and resources more effectively across the many programs in the unit." This curriculum mapping exercise, they assert, should involve a clear articulation of learning outcomes and a demonstration of how courses within and across

language areas are related. As well, the review team suggests that the department must find more effective ways to “operate as a unified team” and to “develop stronger mechanisms for communication and collaboration, both in terms of governance structures and in terms of a more integrated curriculum.”

In addition to some comments on the library resources available to the department, the report focuses on several key areas:

1. ***Curriculum and staffing matters:*** the need for curriculum mapping in each of the department sections; the need to review the offering of introductory French and the relative emphasis in French teaching on grammar and writing skills vs. building of oral/aural skills; consideration of the creation of an Honours program in Spanish, and the possible inclusion of courses outside of the department for the minor in German Studies; exploration of opportunities for exchange programs in Spanish and Japanese Studies; better integration of linguistics teaching in the programs of the department; and consideration of the inclusion of literature and culture courses taught in translation as components of the department’s programs;
2. ***The physical location of the department:*** the report acknowledges the separation from other Arts departments that Modern Languages and Literatures experiences in its current location; the report recommends greater efforts to collaborate with other programs;
3. ***Governance:*** the report recommends greater collaboration amongst members of the department on matters related to teaching and learning (e.g., sharing syllabi, coordinating multi-sectioned courses), and facilitated discussions to improve communication and collaboration within the department.

Summary of Departmental Response: The department reflected on each of the areas of the review report, and expressed its commitment to maintaining its student-centred approach to language instruction. The department recognizes and is committed to undertaking a curriculum review process, examining internal governance procedures, developing policies related to how the department functions, and reaching out to non-Modern Languages and Literatures students. The department is interested in exploring the introduction of an Honours program in Spanish. Several areas of contention and differences remain in the department.

Planning Committee and Provost Response: The Planning Committee and the Provost acknowledged that the facilitated mediation taking place in the department will be key to how the department moves forward. Concerns were expressed about the siloed nature of the department. The Planning Committee expressed its hope that the department will, through its curriculum review process, be able to create some new opportunities for collaboration amongst the faculty, and increase program flexibility for students.