

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

French B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

Date of Review: May 3 - 4, 2021

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by the **French Department**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

The French Department submitted a self-study in April 2021 to the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each member in the program.

Two arm's length external reviewers, both from Ontario and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Vice-Provosts. The review team reviewed the self-study and supporting documentation and then conducted a virtual site visit on May 3 - 4 2021. The visit included meetings with the Provost, Vice-Provosts, Dean, Associate Dean and faculty and students and members of the pertinent administrative units.

The Chair of the French Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (September 2021). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

Strengths

In their report (June 2021), the Review team noted that the department is playing a key role in training students in one of Canada’s two official languages.

The reviewers highlighted the following strengths of the programs:

According to the external review team, the department of French’s fundamental strength is its student-centered vision and mission. On the teaching front, we prepare graduates to think, work and actively participate in the evolving political and cultural environments of the 21st century, but in French. Our graduate and undergraduate programs combine the intellectual agility and other benefits of cultural knowledge and competencies in French within an overall rich liberal arts learning experience. We work to foster our students’ critical awareness to develop conceptual problem-probing as well as community engagement, specifically evidence of the ability to challenge socialized ideas and dialogue from multiple perspectives. These goals are among the key features of our dual umbrella theme “Francophonie et Diversité”.

Areas for Improvement

In their report, the IQAP reviewers identify, in addition to its ten recommendations, four areas in which the Department of French could introduce improvements to our undergraduate and graduate programs.

1. *Creation and Implementation of a Placement Test for entering Level 1 Students.*
2. *More curricular offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels.*
3. *Curricular Revisions*
4. *Review Departmental Committee Structure and Meetings Schedule*

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations with the Department’s and Dean’s Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
Faculty who retire in the next 3-5 years must be replaced at a one for one ratio (1:1)	The department concurs and the chair will consult with Dean.	Dean, Faculty of Humanities.	3-5 years
Administrative assistant position should be made full-time, at the latest, with the return to campus. Some of the tasks that currently fall to the administrative coordinator could be	The department concurs and the chair will consult with Dean.	Dean, Faculty of Humanities.	Immediately

passed on to the administrative assistant (for instance, assigning TAs to faculty or courses, assisting the head, and the graduate and undergraduate chairs, etc.).			
A greater number of language sections taught by part-time faculty or graduate students.	The department concurs but there are issues related to collective agreements with MUFA and CUPE that will slow or deter implementation.	Dean, Faculty of Humanities and other concerned parties.	Ongoing
Consider hiring 1-2 full-time language instructors and / or a faculty member specialized in second-language pedagogy.	The department concurs and the chair will consult with the Dean.	Dean, Faculty of Humanities.	Ongoing
Class size in language courses should be decreased to 30 students.	The department concurs and the chair will consult with Associate Dean and Dean.	Dean and Associate Dean, Faculty of Humanities.	2022-2023
Consider renewing or converting the position currently held by a postdoctoral fellow to ensure ongoing development and enhancement of the language courses.	The department concurs and the chair will consult with the Dean.	Dean, Faculty of Humanities.	Ongoing
The creation of a first-year level course that	The department has addressed this issue	Chair, and undergraduate chair,	Ongoing

would welcome specifically students from 11-12th Grade Core and separate French 1Z06 by levels: one for beginners up to Grade 10 core, one for 11/12 grade core students and another one just for the French immersion students.	with its significant curricular reforms and the implementation of a new placement test (<i>Ev@lang</i>) that will assign students to the appropriate level: A1, A2, B1, B2.	French language courses revamping <i>ad hoc</i> committee.	
Consider making one business French course available as part of the French degrees to French majors and minors.	This recommendation has been addressed by opening these courses to students minoring or majoring in French.	Chair, undergraduate chair, undergraduate committee, and the Academic Advising Office.	Complete
Consider offering a few more courses at the 3rd-4th year level; possibly offer 1-2 courses in French linguistics. (Some students said that they were required for some education programs.)	French education programs require that students be taught in French and the Chair will pursue discussion with Chairs and Dean on how best to meet this need.	Chair, Dean of Faculty of Humanities.	2021-2022
Consider ways for graduate students to explore career paths outside of university teaching. (This might be done at the Faculty of Humanities level, given that alternative career paths are relevant to many graduate students in the humanities.)	The department is moving on this recommendation and the chair will consult with relevant parties to offer more volunteer and employment opportunities.	Chair, graduate chair French, Associate Dean of graduate studies, Faculty of Humanities (Internship Coordinator) and other university services.	6-12 months

Dean's Response, Faculty of Humanities:

The Dean is happy to see that the review team recognized the steps that have been taken since the last review to update and rationalize the undergraduate curriculum, headlined by the introduction of the European standards, known as DELF. With the help of an SAF-funded postdoctoral fellow, the new curriculum is now on offer, and we hope that students will see the advantages of a certificate for French achievement that is recognized internationally. We will want to monitor the impact of the new curriculum over the next several years. The Dean recommends that the Department continue to gather data from students via an exit survey, or other mechanism and also recommends that the Department work with the Communications manager to regularly promote the advantages of our new DELF pedagogy.

With respect to the implementation table provided the Department's response, there are several ideas that the Department notes have already been achieved. The call for a commitment to replace all retired faculty members is premature, as I know of no impending retirements in French. When retirement plans are made official, the Dean will consider the possibility of an appointment. In the meantime, the Dean remains open to all opportunities.

The Faculty's Director of Finance and Administration has been working closely with the Admin Coordinator and Chair in French on a staffing solution. It is a priority of the Chair to have an AA with native French ability, and the Dean has committed to that request.

With respect to the level I curriculum, the reviewers' recommendation appears to involve a misunderstanding: 1Z06 is for students with only grade-10 French. Currently, students with grade 12 are admitted to 1A06/2M06, whereas students with only grade-11 have to take 2Z06 first and students with only grade-10 have to take 1Z06 and 2Z06 before 1A06/2M06, which is required for the major. 1A06/2M06 is a problem, not only because the level of French required for entry to the program is so high (such that students without grade-12 can't become majors and graduate in 4 years), but also because it serves as a prerequisite for any student wishing to take higher-level courses. Further, even for students with grade-12, the gap between Immersion and Core students leads to many of the latter dropping 1A06. The placement test seeks to address this by redirecting weaker students with grade-12 to 2Z06, thus in fact increasing the number of students who face extra hurdles.

To address the problem the reviewers rightly identify that the department needs to think of ways to open access to the major—and indeed to courses—to students without such a high level of French (e.g., remove 2Z06 while making 1Z06 more robust and/or admitting students achieving high grades in 1Z06 and/or 2Z06 to the major without requiring them to take 1A06/2M06, or at least without requiring an extra 6 units by splitting 1A06/2M06 into two 3-unit courses—itsself facilitating access—and allowing students to place directly into the second).

There are several recommendations that the reviewers make with respect to hiring instructors, class size and program numbers. It is worth noting, however, that 1Z06 is the only course in which enrolment exceeds 50 in a section, though in most cases intake is less than 30. Enrolments in 1A06 last year were 39, 37, 43, & 20. It is also the case that 2020-21 was the first year in which the number of sections of 1A06 was reduced from 5 to 4, and this shift has not resulted in an increase in class size, while the number of sections of 1Z06 was increased from 2 to 3 (to facilitate the new pedagogical approach),

reducing class size. Therefore, the claim that these changes have diminished program enrolments is unwarranted, given that they only went into effect last year. Similarly, the claim that there has been a net cut to the resourcing of the program is also inaccurate, as one fewer 1A06 section must be viewed alongside the addition of one new 1Z06 section.

There was also a recommendation to add more upper year courses to the annual offerings. The Dean recognizes that this has been a desire of the department for a few years, but it is important that we recognize the following. It is true that the department agreed to reduce the level-3 requirement by 3 units in order to meet the expanded resource demands of the curriculum owing to new pedagogy, reducing the required total program units to 51. However, that total is still higher than most Humanities programs. It also remains difficult to see a need for more level-3 and -4 courses when enrolments in half of these are below 15 (with only a couple of courses exceeding 30). Moreover, since no honours student needs more than 17 units in each year (51/3), there is a reasonable amount of choice: we have 27 at level 2 and 15 at levels 3 & 4, for a total of 57 units. Given that some courses are available on rotation and that students can take electives across different levels, the total number of choices is even greater than those numbers indicate.

The Dean commends the department for opening up the Professional French courses to majors and minors. (Presumably the reviewers mean Professional not Business French). The Department's decision is welcome. But the problem is that the certificates attract few students because Essential French requires three 6-unit courses and 1A06/2M06 is a prerequisite for Professional French 1. If professional French could be taught at a less advanced level such that students with only grade-12 could enroll in Professional French 1, the professional French courses would be likely to attract more students (and further French would still be required for the certificate). The department needs to consider that 6-unit courses have become quite rare on campus, especially in our Faculty. Requiring three 6-unit courses makes scheduling very difficult for students. If the department agrees that the name "Essential French" should be changed, we could pursue other options, though the Dean would also recommend a review of the certificate requirements.

With respect to career readiness, the Dean recommends that the Chair speak to the manager of career and experiential programs to ensure that she is also seeking French-language internships or post-graduation jobs in the Hamilton area. The Dean also agrees that the Department should do more to help its graduate students consider and prepare for non-academic careers. The Department's Graduate Director should raise this issue when the Associate Dean Graduate Studies next brings all the Graduate Directors together.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation:

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.