

Internal Academic Review 2004-2005
Department of French Studies
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

Department of French Studies

Overall, the Department of French Studies received an extremely positive review from both the External Consultants and the Review Team. The External Consultants were impressed by the Department's ambience of collegiality and the helpfulness of its staff. Undergraduate and graduate students alike expressed their appreciation for the knowledge, passion and accessibility of faculty members. The Review Team recognized the Centre Francophone, which offers regular cultural programming to the community at large, as a valuable outreach program.

Of particular note to the Senate Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) was the Department's very strong research profile. External Consultants ranked the Unit as one of the top three French Departments among Anglophone Universities in Canada and its positive review was largely in agreement with the results of its first internal academic review in 1997. Nonetheless, the IARC agrees with concerns expressed by reviewers around the long-term stress that can occur in small units faced with ever increasing demands.

Major Recommendations

1. **FACULTY:** The need for additional faculty was a recurring theme in the reports of reviewers. It was suggested that this was a major factor contributing to a perceived lack of core breadth and depth in courses offered at both senior undergraduate and graduate levels. This factor, combined with a slight decline in enrolment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and the Department's dependency on adjunct teaching, may call into question the advisability of plans to double the current number of graduate students. The efforts to date of both the Department and of the Faculty of Arts and Science are duly noted and the IARC support the Department's commitment to proposing candidates to the Queen's National Scholar competition.

The IARC encourages the Department of French Studies and Faculty of Arts and Science to continue to work together to ensure the faculty complement is sufficient to support the Department's goals.

2. CURRICULUM: At the undergraduate level, the Review Team and External Consultants alike were clear in their recommendations for greater breadth (wider course offerings) and depth (more seminar format in upper years). The Department is to be commended for responding quickly to engage in an extensive curriculum review of its undergraduate program. At the graduate level, external consultants expressed strong praise for “ a beautifully conceived and articulated course of study and thesis preparation” in the doctoral program but raised concerns with regard to the program at the Master's level.

The IARC recommends that the Department of French Studies consider reviewers' recommendations to review curriculum, degree requirements and time to completion prior to doubling student enrolment at the Master's level.

Other recommendation the Department may wish to consider:

1. The IARC agrees with the recommendation of reviewers to make additional efforts to improve the training, coordination and supervision of Teaching Assistants.

**Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review
of the Department of French Studies**

*Joint response submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and
the Head of the Department of French Studies*

Recommendation 1: Faculty

The Faculty has identified language acquisition as an important component of the department's goals and will address such needs in the areas of research and graduate supervision in its staffing strategy.

Recommendation 2: Curriculum

Under major recommendation two regarding curriculum, French Studies is engaged in an extensive review of its undergraduate curriculum and some changes will be implemented in 2007-2008 while others will be discussed by the department in the coming months.

Other recommendation the Department may wish to consider:

French Studies is also exploring ways to improve the training, coordination and supervision of Teaching Assistants, some of which may be addressed by a new position in the field of language acquisition to be held jointly by the language departments.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Principal (Academic)

Internal Academic Review (IAR)
2004-2005
Department of French Studies

The Department of French was first reviewed in 1997, the year Queen's inaugurated the Internal Academic Review (IAR), as part of an over-arching review of the four modern languages and linguistics departments. The department appears to have addressed the recommendations made in that review. The current review was initiated in 2004. The IAR team met on October 4 and October 12, 2004. We defined a variety of questions and quality indicators that were forwarded to the consultants. Four Committee members met with the consultants during their visit on October 21st and 22nd 2004 for meetings with adjunct faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and a visit of the library facilities and Kingston Hall. All four of us had an exit meeting with the consultants. After receiving the consultants report we all met with Joanne Bénard, the recently appointed Chair, on February 7th, 2005 and discussed her response to the External Consultant's report and to a variety of questions raised by the Committee. In drafting this report we have depended upon the unit self-study developed by the department and the External Consultant's report which states most of the opinions of our Committee and provides the rationale for most of our recommendations.

Introduction:

The Department has maintained its distinguished record of scholarship from a diverse faculty. With the influx of multiple new faculty over the last 10 years and the leadership of the current and previous Head there has been an enhancement of collegiality and good will amongst the faculty and staff. This spirit has extended to supportive and enthusiastic relationships between the department and their undergraduate and graduate students. As documented in the External Consultant's report, the current quality of their research and the level of their funding ranks them amongst the top three French Departments in English Canada despite their small and dwindling number of faculty. Their graduate students have done exceptionally well. In interviews with both undergraduate and graduate students comments such as "wonderfully cooperative, interactive, charming, knowledgeable, caring" were attributed to the professoriate.

The Department also runs the Francophone Centre, a crucial Queen's outreach program. With its regular cultural programming open to the community at large, it represents a very important cultural pillar for Kingston's significant francophone community.

A major concern of the consultants and our committee is the Departments' loss of faculty, including the instability of two non-renewable positions, and a resultant lack of core breadth and depth in offerings in both undergraduate and graduate courses. The current faculty is teaching 2.5 courses/year compared to the evolving standard in Arts and Science of 2.0 courses.

Recommendations:

Our recommendations focus on four aspects of the department: (i) faculty; (ii) undergraduate programs; (iii) graduate programs; and (iv) physical resources. The Committee was encouraged by the Rae Report and the growing public support for enhanced funding of our universities. This is a time for top tier universities such as Queen's to begin reinvesting in its faculty resources if it

is to rationally maintain its vision as a quality leader in Canada against the competition of its peers

1. Faculty

The department currently has 10 tenured/tenure-track faculty and two additional tenure-track lines which are currently frozen and filled by three-year non-renewable appointments in Quebec language and in second language acquisition. Canadian and Quebec studies is one of the major areas of student interest in the department and one of its traditional foci of excellence and requires more than the current tenure-track position to allow appropriate breadth and depth of courses and to attract excellent graduate students.

Recommendation:

- 1. We recommend that the Canadian and Quebec studies position be converted to a tenure-track position.**

The second language acquisition position is critical within the department for coordinating the communication and culture oral programmes, teaching throughout in the graduate programme and supervising students and adjunct faculty members.

Recommendation:

- 2. We recommend that the second language acquisition position be converted to a permanent position.**

The Department has begun to attract an increasing number of international students at the same time as there is growing international interest in post-colonial literature from ex-French colonies. The faculty has noted there is no specialist in medieval studies, a deficiency unusual to Queen's according to the consultants.

Recommendation:

- 3. We recommend consideration be given to an additional Faculty position in francophone studies outside of Canada and France and/or medieval studies, possibly through a Queen's National Scholar (QNS) application.**

We found no outstanding Equity issues in meeting with the Adjuncts and in discussions with the Head. Of the ten Faculty, the only two Full Professors are male. We were assured that this is on the basis of merit. Nevertheless the Department should ensure that all members are given the appropriate opportunity and support to progress through the ranks.

2. Undergraduate Programme:

We echo the comments of the External Consultants and the students who uniformly praise the Faculty for their enthusiasm and knowledge but suggest improvements in the course organization. These include the following:

Recommendations:

- 1. We recommend a review of the undergraduate program with the introduction of : a) more seminars in upper years; b) more formal requirements at the 300 and 400 level such that there is a broader exposure of all honour students to the breadth of courses offered in both linguistics and the broad historical range of French literature.**

2. **We recommend that the French Department continue its efforts to attract students from other departments to French as a minor option.**
3. **We encourage the Department and University to facilitate French study majors to spend a later year abroad.**
4. **We recommend the Department institute a formal method of feedback to the Department from French study major students outside of the Queen's evaluation programme.**
5. **We recommend the course offerings be broadened when additional faculty are appointed.**

3. Graduate Programme:

The Department offers an MA programme, which it intends to increase from 10 to 20 students, and a PhD programme. The PhD programme has been lauded by the External Reviewers as a “beautifully conceived and articulated course of study and thesis preparation which is one of the best amongst doctoral programmes in North America”.

Most students require two years to complete the one year Master's program. Their second year funding has been unstable. These funding problems have been intensified by the increasing number of international students whose higher tuition fees have not been covered by sufficient tuition bursaries.

Recommendations:

1. **We recommend that the requirements for a Master's degree and the time to completion be reviewed, with consideration to either extending the current program to two years or lightening the expectations of the one year program.**
2. **We support the Department's goal of increasing the number of Master's students from 10 to 20 if stability in graduate student funding is introduced into the Master's programme such that the funding for 2nd year Master's students and international students is both equitable and predictable.**
3. **We recommend that graduate students performing TA duties be given appropriate training, a formal set of expectations, and feedback. There is a role for the Queen's Instructional Development Centre (IDC) in refining the current TA workshop.**

4. Physical Resources

There is currently insufficient space for graduate students within Kingston Hall, both as a place for personal study, and to have meeting space with undergraduate students for whom they are teaching assistants.

Recommendation:

1. **We recommend that additional space be made available to graduate students within Kingston Hall.**

A space on the second floor of Kingston Hall, the Red Room, is currently used intermittently during the academic year by the ASUS as a photo studio. This studio should be located elsewhere.

Recommendation:

- 2. We recommend that the Red Room be made available for French studies and other departments' use as a classroom or work/study space for graduate students.**

The Language laboratory space includes Lab B which has outdated equipment and requires renovation. It is in stark contrast to the excellent facilities in Lab A.

Recommendation:

- 3. We recommend improving the utility of Lab B either as a language laboratory or as classroom or office space.**

Executive Summary

The current Queen's French Faculty has excellent research and teaching accomplishments, especially for such a small Faculty. However the reduction of three (3) tenure-track positions since 1997 and the need to broaden some of its courses and deepen its expertise in key areas, have left the Department vulnerable to erosion in scholarship and morale and its Faculty more open to external offers. The following are our most important recommendations.

1. Transfer the current three year non-renewable position in Canadian and French studies into a tenure-track position.
2. Convert the Second Language acquisition position into a permanent position.
3. Consider an additional Faculty appointment in non Canada/France Francophonie and/or medieval studies, perhaps through a successful application for QNS.
4. Strengthen the Honours Undergraduate Program by more formal requirements at the 300 and 400 levels for breadth of study and for seminars.
5. Transfer additional office space in Kingston Hall to graduate students.
6. Enhance the training and supervision of Teaching Assistants.

We end with a quote from the 1997 IAR. "We recommend that Queen's acknowledge and support this strong department, with its excellent research record, strong Ph.D. programme, and important French cultural presence".

Respectfully submitted by:

The French Internal Academic Review Team

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