

Modern Languages Program Review

Faculty of Humanities, College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

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Program and Unit Review: Modern Languages

Dean's Summary Report

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte

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Operating within the Faculty of Humanities in the College of Arts, MOLA offers four programs in French (two certificates, a minor and an extended minor), two certificates in Russian, two certificates in Spanish, one certificate in each of Halq'eméylem, Japanese, and Mandarin, and additional courses in German and Punjabi.

In May 2012, the Program Review Committee conducted a two-day site visit as part of a Program Review of Modern Languages. Members of the Program Review Committee included: two experts in French, one expert in Spanish, and one expert in Japanese. Separate reviews were conducted for German, Mandarin, Russian, Punjabi and Halq'eméylem. Reviewers were experts in the field from other Canadian universities. All of the latter separate reviews, but for German, were conducted in the form of curriculum reviews that did not include site visits.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND ALIGNMENT

Recommendation 1: The External Review Committee that conducted the site visit identified the array of languages offered by MOLA as a marketable strength. However, they raised questions regarding the sustainability of this many languages within the current fiscal climate. They advised that, if budget was not forthcoming and if some of these languages had to continue to be offered as Independent Studies options, the number of language offerings be reduced. They supported the continued delivery of Halq'eméylem and Punjabi on the basis of alignment with community needs and suggested that German, Mandarin and Russian be considered as areas to cut. This recommendation contrasts with that made by the individual reviewers of German, Mandarin, Russian and German, all of whom supported the continued delivery of these languages, with some suggestions for improvement.

Action: Budget constraints compromise the forms of delivery of under-enrolled non-base budget languages, many of which are taught as Independent Studies. The Dean has transferred into the base budget two sections, previously earmarked for Punjabi, to be used in accordance with the department's strategic priorities. The department's priorities are the French and Spanish programs. The department will use sections from International to support the delivery of Mandarin.

It is worth noting that all eight first-year language courses are fully or almost fully enrolled, with the exception of Halq'eméylem, which receives funding from the Indigenous Studies budget. The new French Major is cost-neutral due to increased class sizes. The department believes that the array of language options in MOLA will make the proposed language requirement in the new BA framework more appealing to students.

Recommendation 2: The Review Committee recommended that the head review all grades prior to their submission so as to identify anomalies. It recommended that the head assume greater control over scheduling, course/instructor evaluations and feedback to instructors.

Action: Heads have been requested to implement annual professional workload plans with their faculty members. The Dean will request that the head oversee grading and scheduling. Conversations regarding access to evaluations will constitute part of a broader discussion with the union.

Recommendation 3: Course and instructor evaluations should be conducted regularly

Action: The department will be asked to discuss the content of course evaluations that could be separate from instructor evaluations. Teaching & Learning is looking into the design of course evaluations from an institutional perspective. The reviewer's suggestion will be forwarded to labour management for discussion.

Recommendation 4: The reviewers recommended the position of department assistant be extended to a full-time position.

Action: Current fiscal restraints do not allow for this.

PROGRAM CURRICULUM, STANDARDS AND DELIVERY

Courses in all of the languages were assessed as having clear learning outcomes with appropriate objectives.

Recommendation 1: Reviewers recommended that the extended minor in French be reviewed when the Major is introduced.

Action: This will constitute part of a major review of extended minors in the BA.

Recommendation 2: The department needs to address time conflicts in course scheduling so as to ensure that students' needs prevail over faculty preferences; timetables should be advertised at least one year ahead.

Action: The above pertains to Spanish in particular – this will be addressed with the scheduling office.

Recommendation 3: Admission standards were noted as being slightly lower than at institutions such as UBC, SFU and UVic.

Action: The department noted that this is beyond the purview of MOLA.

Recommendation 4: Placement tests need to be refined and advertised more widely. Information about these tests should be passed on to students. Guidelines need to be clarified for students with native or near-native competency, students who have studied a language outside of Canada or who have oral competency but poor written skills.

Action: The department head has met with Arts Advice to talk about placement issues, MOLA's challenge policy and questions about study abroad. Over the course of this year, MOLA will draw up a set of clearer guidelines for placement of students and make them available to students.

Information on placement tests will be added to course descriptions and the MOLA web-site, as well as distributed to Arts Advisors.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommended more focus on the communicative approach in course content at the first and second year, with less attention to grammar. It recommended that MOLA explore offerings that focus more on content to facilitate the application of language skills to the workplace and to students' personal interests.

Action: MOLA welcomes working with programs such as Business and Criminology, although students in these programs have very few electives outside their own discipline. The Spanish instructor intends to explore the introduction of an additional 200-level course and two more 300-level courses, with specific communication focuses, which could be offered in rotation and in partnership with nearby institutions. Spanish will develop intensive summer courses through study abroad in the course of the preparation for a Spanish Minor.

Recommendation 6: Consider "flipping the classroom" by putting lectures on-line and using class-time for interactive learning.

Action: This is better directed to intermediate and advanced language classes as beginner students appreciate instructor guidance. A certain amount of grammar is necessary to meet articulation requirements but students will be encouraged to seek opportunities for development of oral skills outside of the classroom, as in volunteer work. In 2014/15, the department will explore developing peer-tutoring with upper-level students tutoring lower-level students. The Dean has requested use of student hubs in the student centre for MOLA students to form study groups while on campus.

Recommendation 7: To facilitate the flow of courses, the department should reflect on its methods of delivery (i.e. online and blended formats) and these should take place ideally in the summer session.

Action: A fully online course is being prepared for a third-year French linguistics course and student feedback on this format will be sought.

Recommendation 8: The committee noted the benefits of the additional seminars in the department, normally not available in programs. The committee recommended that resources could be saved by better managing the balance between seminars and class size.

Action: Seminars will be retained for French, Japanese and Spanish and will not be offered for the other languages.

Recommendation 9: The Committee suggested that, by better managing the balance between small seminars and classes, the department could either increase the number of students in the classroom to a maximum of 30 (reducing the number of sections) or increase the number of students in the small seminars to 12 (reducing the overall number of small seminars).

Action: French class sizes have been increased to allow for the delivery of the French major. Instructors of other language classes admit more students than course outlines specify so as to build up demand at lower levels.

NOTE: The department will investigate the possibility of collaborating with the Teaching and Learning Centre to organize a full day or weekend departmental retreat aimed at assessing programs, course delivery, curricular practices, academic assessment and standards for grading and evaluating

ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Contrary to the perception of the MOLA department members that MOLA is shrinking in size, evidence in the UFV Fact Book shows that FTE in MOLA have increased steadily between 2006-07 and 2011-12. However, enrolment in upper level classes remains low in many languages.

Recommendation 1: Advising should be more proactive, and previous learning better assessed to ensure appropriate placement.

Action: See #4 in section above.

Recommendation 2: The department should hold workshops on articulation with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Action: This has been done in French and Spanish; this will improve international recognition and mobility. The CEFR is not useful for Asian languages. It was noted that the Japan Foundation is currently working on an equivalent standard for Japanese language.

Recommendation 3: A closer affiliation with TEP is recommended.

Action: Conversations have already taken place in relation to the TEP Secondary Program 2-credit course in Special Topics (EDUC 499). The TEP department head felt it would be interesting to offer this course as a “Methods in Language Teaching” course. The TEP Advisor stressed that applicants to TEP receive bonus marks if they have 6 credits of language courses, so they are accepted into TEP more readily. This information needs to be widely advertised to students.

Recommendation 4: Collaboration with marketing and communications would help to further augment enrolment.

Action: MOLA will consult with MARCOM to determine appropriate strategies.

FACULTY

The Review Committee noted that the high degree of commitment of faculty and staff to linguistic quality, to cultural integrity of the program, and to student success.

Recommendation 1: Long-term sessional instructors could be better recognized within the institution.

Action: Subsequent to this review, long-term sessionals have received greater priority in workload allocation within the Collective Agreement.

Recommendation 2: Ideally, the department should hire one faculty member in French (in applied linguistics and in the area of computer-assisted language learning) and one half time faculty member in

Spanish (with an emphasis on language and culture) with a view to increasing the research profile of the department.

Action: Budget does not allow for hires at the moment but these areas of specialisation will be taken into consideration when we are in a position to recruit.

RESOURCES

Recommendation 1: The department should commit to modern technologies better adapted to students and eliminate the Educational technology position that services Can 8 software.

Action: The department is attempting to find a free, open-source replacement for Can 8.

Recommendation 2: Japanese classes should always have e-rooms.

Action: E-rooms are requested every semester, but are not always available; the Dean will bring this to the attention of Campus Planning and speak to those in charge of room bookings.

Recommendation 3: The website and other social media tools should be better used to bring a fresh face to the department.

Action: One-time funding can be directed to the department to assist with this.

ALIGNMENT WITH UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY NEEDS/PLANS

Recommendation 1: MOLA should explore collaborations with Education regarding the Major in French, and collaborate with Business regarding students studying Spanish, Punjabi and Mandarin.

Action: The department will approach the School of Business regarding a certificate for Japanese for business

Recommendation 2: French instructors should develop more partnerships with associations.

Action: The department has developed contacts with the Abbotsford branch of Canadian Parents for French and is pursuing collaboration with the Teacher Education Program (TEP).

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SPECIFIC LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AND COURSES

FRENCH

Recommendation 1: Develop the French Major.

Action: A cost-neutral proposal for a French Major has gone forward to DQAB.

Recommendation 2: Do not register immersion students and beginners in the same courses.

Action: Guidelines have been developed and are available on the MOLA web-page in the registration flow chart for former French Immersion students.

Recommendation 3: Provide more opportunities for students to challenge.

Action: The department will look into the possibility of creating a block challenge for native or near-native speakers, to enable them to challenge both FREN 215 and 216 at the same time.

Recommendation 4: Consider mandatory placement tests and pass on clear information to students.

Action: See #4 in the section on Program Curriculum, Standards and Delivery. Mandatory placement tests would require a significant outlay of institutional resources and additional faculty workload. The alternative, charging students for testing, would lower enrolments. In most cases, testing is unnecessary; student proficiency is known from their prior level of study. Instead, MOLA has put a clear statement on placement tests in the calendar and on the MOLA website advertising the opportunity for placement tests, and advising students that they should consult the relevant language advisors within the department to be placed appropriately.

Recommendation 5: Focus on French as a pragmatic tool to enable students to communicate and interact socially in order to build their professional careers.

Action: The department will place greater emphasis on oral proficiency. In 2014-15, FREN 242 (Intermediate Oral Communication) will be included in the French Minor; the new Advanced French Oral Communications course, which will be a part of the French Major, need not require FREN 219 (Intermediate Composition) as a pre-requisite.

Recommendation 6: Address prerequisites and the gap between FREN 102 and FREN 215.

Action: This will be addressed through a curriculum mapping session in 2015. The department has requested and received data from Institutional Research with regards to the success of students moving directly from Grade 12 French into either FREN 102 or 215. Prerequisites for FREN 215 will be listed as “French 12 with a B or higher, or FREN 102”. FREN 102 will be listed as “French 12 with less than a B or FREN 101”. These pre-requisites will be re-evaluated after each semester and revised if necessary.

SPANISH

Recommendation 1: The Review Committee was not in favour of the development of the Spanish Minor as presented but it did recommend that UFV develop its own Minor along different, more creative, and perhaps more practical directions.

Action: Spanish faculty will redevelop the Spanish Minor proposal to include study abroad as a major component. Credits earned abroad at partner institutions will be transferred to UFV and counted as UFV credits. This is a low/no cost alternative. Other innovative solutions to providing Spanish students with a degree level credential will be investigated, including a partnership with UFV's Latin American Studies program.

Recommendation 2: There should be less emphasis on grammar and more emphasis on functional skills; at the advanced level, courses with more practical purposes should be introduced.

Action: This will be explored in 2014/15. Further practical courses could be introduced in rotation with existing upper-level courses. They could be offered through study abroad or Canadian partner institutions.

Recommendation 3: There should be less use of English in the cultural component of Spanish 201 and 202.

Action: Done.

Recommendation 4: The department should develop and publicise guidelines for prior learning assessment and provide students with placement tests.

Action: Prior learning assessment already occurs through challenge exams and portfolios. Placement tests are offered and students placed accordingly. MOLA has presented a clear statement on these procedures in the calendar and will advise students to consult the relevant language advisors.

JAPANESE

Japanese was introduced in 1997 and demand has grown steadily.

Recommendation 1: Develop an Advanced Language Proficiency Certificate.

Action: This will be submitted by the department in its next contribution to the Education Plan.

Recommendation 2: Advanced level courses should be offered every other year to avoid the need for IS.

Action: The department disagrees, as students will not wait for two years for a third-year class.

HALQ'EMÉYLEM

The reviewer noted that Halq'eméylem faces important challenges as a language and within UFV and that it is incumbent on UFV to promote Halq'eméylem and to work alongside of language champions of Halq'eméylem. This should include developing a working partnership with the community regarding recruitment as well as the design of and support for courses. The reviewer raised questions about the purpose of these courses. If they are required for the sake of employment, they require greater fluency. If for purposes such as cultural fluency, a different course design is recommended.

Recommendation 1: Design courses from a Halq'eméylem world view and from the way Halq'eméylem is spoken in the Halq'eméylem world; the language must be reattached to the relationships that are part of its existence.

Action: The instructor is reworking calendar descriptions to describe how this is attended to in courses.

Recommendation 2: Support the continued language development of the instructor with mentors, use of technology, community mobilization, and curriculum development and assessment that respects Halq'eméylem ways of knowing.

Action: The Dean's office will support the establishment of a network comprising UFV and teachers of Halq'eméylem. Such forum will also include elders and scholars instrumental in establishing this program.

Recommendation 3: Overreliance on Can8 should be replaced by transfer of digital content to a flexible open source system.

Action: This is being explored.

Recommendation 4: Form stronger links with SFU Office of Indigenous Education and First Nations Studies and University of Victoria, where First Nations research has gained national and international recognition.

Action: Our Halq'eméylem instructor will continue to build links with UVic's office of Indigenous Studies, First Nations researchers and linguists.

GERMAN

Recommendation 1: German courses exemplify UFV's mission to "educate citizens for a global community" and meet and sometimes exceed the standards of curriculum design and delivery with post-secondary education in BC. There are easily rectified discrepancies between the course descriptions on the UFV website and the syllabi.

Action: These minor discrepancies have been corrected.

Recommendation 2: To make instructional materials more consistent with MOLA's emphasis on oral communication, additional materials should be reviewed for possible inclusion.

Action: This will be done in 2014-15.

Recommendation 3: Supplement basic learning materials with cultural artifacts from literature, film, fine and performing arts.

Action: This will be done in 2014-15.

Recommendation 4: Germany's generosity with respect to awarding scholarships should be exploited on behalf of UFV students.

Action: Scholarships will be better advertised on the department web-site and through the International Education's Study Abroad blog.

Recommendation 5: It will be beneficial to develop a Proficiency Certificate in German similar to those offered in other languages. This would require course offerings to be expanded, with possible business courses.

Action: There are no resources to develop this unless the department proposes a cost neutral program.

Recommendation 6: A 12-month permanent appointment for the instructor would provide stability and continuity, and enable the instructor to generate new initiatives.

Action: Current student demand does not warrant offering the seven courses required for such an appointment to be considered.

MANDARIN

Recommendation 1: Mandarin 210, linked to the Study Tour to China, should contain tasks and measures that encourage students to get more immersed in the Chinese language.

Action: As part of 2013 Study Tour, students submitted their daily journals in Mandarin to record their experience in China. This will be formally included as a learning objective in the Mandarin 210 course outline.

Recommendation 2: The content of the Intermediate Proficiency Certificate is more of a basic level.

Action: UFV students have been successful in the provincial Mandarin speaking contests and have won impressive academic scholarships. There is confusion in the interpretation of the word “intermediate”, which in the context of the certificate program at UFV refers to the end of second year; this will require further consultation with experts in the various language fields.

Recommendation 3: The learning outcomes for the Intermediate Proficiency Certificate should be revised to specify the number of characters that students should be able to read and write.

Action: The number of characters varies according to the way they are counted. It could be misleading to list a specific number of characters that will be learned. Further advice will be solicited.

Recommendation 4: Provide stability for a dedicated sessional faculty.

Action: There are no resources to create a permanent appointment unless demand grows considerably.

PUNJABI

Recommendation 1: Low student enrollment is a problem at the 200 level (53.9%). This needs to be addressed.

Action: Improve recruitment by advertising on Punjabi radio stations, through Sikh Temples and the Punjabi Language Education Association, as well as to non-Punjabi students who wish to work in the service sector. MOLA could work with the Centre for Indo-Canadian studies and organize a Punjabi film festival.

Action: MOLA will continue to collaborate with the Indo-Canadian Centre through the creation of the Indo-Canadian Certificate program.

Recommendation 2: A better balance between oral and written competencies is recommended.

Action: This will be addressed 2014-15.

Recommendation 3: To mitigate the problem of students of different levels registering in Punjabi 101 classes, encourage students with previous knowledge to challenge the course and do not permit students who have taken Grade 11 Punjabi in high school to take Punjabi 101.

Action: the first has been implemented; regarding the second suggestion, the department agrees but there is only one section of Punjabi per term. If a placement test could be given before the beginning of term the department could determine if there is sufficient demand for a “self-funded” Punjabi 102 to be offered at the same time as the 101 section. The department will look into doing this placement test i Advanced Language Proficiency Certificate in the high schools.

Recommendation 4: A course for advanced learners should be offered

Action: This can only be done if we have sufficient demand and if it is offered as a cost neutral section.

Recommendation 5: Introduce a Proficiency certificate at the intermediate level in Punjabi.

Action: This will not be feasible unless the program is designed as cost neutral.

RUSSIAN

Recommendation 1: Establish an exchange program with St. Petersburg to help internationalization the Russian program.

Action: An agreement has been signed with the Polytechnique University in St. Petersburg, including the pursuit of Russian language studies. Students will be able to attend this university as early as July 2014.

Recommendation 2: Offer more Russian literature courses.

Action: The English department, with which the Russian literature courses are cross-listed, would have to agree to share the costs; offering these is contingent on demand.

Recommendation 3: The pool of first-year students is insufficiently large to create a base for higher levels. The hiring of a sessional lecturer would support the base and offer more flexibility to students.

Action: Demand does not warrant a permanent hire. If numbers warrant, one section of Russian in each of fall and winter semesters will be scheduled.