

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Spanish and Italian

*Joint response submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and
the Head of the Department of Spanish and Italian*

Recommendation 1: Faculty

Under major recommendation one, the Faculty Office released a position to the department in the last budget and staffing strategy and while the department has selected a candidate for the position, the candidate has not yet accepted. Whether filled in the next few weeks or with another search in the fall, the position will restore the complement of tenure/tenure-track members to four and provide a basis for future growth.

Recommendation 2: Graduate Program

Under major recommendation two regarding graduate curriculum, SPAN is engaged in a review of its graduate curriculum and a search for cross-disciplinary partners for new course offerings.

Recommendation 3: Undergraduate Program

Under major recommendation three, the Faculty Office hopes to release in the future a position in language acquisition to be shared by the language departments to coordinate and enhance language instructions. Such a position would help build the “intellectual coherence and rigor” of SPAN’s offerings in the face of steadily increasing enrolments. The department will also begin meeting in the fall to discuss reforming the program’s core curriculum.

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)

**Report of the Internal Review Team for the
Department of Spanish and Italian
Queen's University**

Review Team Membership:

Mr. Peter Aitken, Marketing & Communication

Ms. Jennie Baxter, Psychology doctoral student

Dr. Richard Chaykowski, Policy Studies

Dr. Mark Chen, Physics

Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolka, Education

Ms. Alicia Miller, History/Politics undergraduate student

Dr. Sylvia Söderlind, English (Chair)

Process

In addition to reviewing the documentation, the Internal Review Team, either together or individually, met with members of the Spanish and Italian Department on several occasions. The undergraduate student representative met with the undergraduates in the fall; the graduate student representative met with the graduate students on two occasions (the last one of which was also attended by the Chair). Because the external consultants visited the department at different times (due to a snowstorm that prevented Dr. Kirk from coming when originally planned) the team met with Dr. Grieve and Dr. Kirk, the external consultants, on separate occasions. A meeting with faculty originally planned for December was deferred until late March, on which occasion three members of the team met with faculty, staff and graduate students. At the request of the graduate students the Chair and the graduate representative subsequently met again with the graduate students. The Internal Review Team did not peruse the external consultants' reports until after all of these meetings had taken place. Our report takes into account all information gathered from these various sources. We would like to extend our thanks to the staff of the Faculty of Arts and Science, in particular Sue Bedell and Nancy Cutway, whose assistance greatly helped in our work.

Preamble

The Internal Review Team would like to reiterate, from the outset, the observation made by both external consultants that their recommendations-- several of which are echoed in our report-- are remarkably similar to those made in the last IAR report. No reasons have been given for the lack of implementation of the 1998 recommendations on the part of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and we sincerely hope this *déjà vu* experience will not be repeated for the next IAR. We would also like briefly to address the issues of low morale that has characterized the Department of Spanish and Italian according to both consultants' reports. That there have been internal tensions in the department during the period covered by our report is not disputed by anyone, but we see most of these as resulting from, rather than as causing, specific management problems. In particular, as will be noted in our findings, the loss of faculty and its inevitable consequences for workload have had severely negative effects on the health of the department as a whole. As will become obvious in the following, we see workload, hence faculty and staff complement, as the absolutely most crucial issue for the wellbeing of the department, which has taken large strides in overcoming a troubled past, and we hope that the Faculty will support its strong desire to put history to rest. Our task is to look to the future; the tendency to focus on the past, which permeates in particular Dr. Kirk's report, risks putting obstacles in the way of progress.

Research and Scholarship

The Spanish and Italian faculty are to be commended on their ability to maintain a high standard of scholarship under a situation of work overload. We concur with the external consultants' observations that, without exception, the tenured, tenure-track, and term appointment faculty are all productive scholars. Dr. Chamberlain, Dr. Mennell, and Dr. Santeramo have all held SSHRC research grants, either individually or in

collaborative projects. Dr. Chamberlain, who is now the longest serving FTE in the department, has published a monograph and an edited collection of essays as well as a solid list of refereed articles and book chapters. His long service to the profession has

possibility of several different types of majors, as provided for by more diverse and flexible course offerings. This suggestion from the Review Team and the external reviewers should not be interpreted as recommending that the department becomes one of just “service teaching” and foreign language training. Rather, it should be interpreted as a method for improving the quality of the undergraduate program for majors and non-majors alike. Feedback from undergraduate majors stressed the need to improve the upper-year language offerings. The department’s strategic plan to redesign the core curriculum for majors should address this concern. We believe, as do the external reviewers, that strengthening the upper-year language instruction would have the effect of improving the quality of the program for majors. These quality improvements would translate, given time, into an increase in the number of program majors, especially in an environment in which the demand for introductory Spanish and Italian is so high.

Prof. Grieve’s recommendation 5 describes the formulation of a departmental plan that develops a clear path for majors. The path would include beginning language instruction and “bridge or foundation” courses between the language classes and the upper-year offerings. Upper-year offerings that include advanced language instruction as well as literature are suggested in Prof. Grieve’s report. A clearer path for the major or several diverse paths serving majors from different constituencies—notably SLAS but also other literature and linguistics students-- would also translate into increased numbers in the undergraduate program. Why does the Review Team believe this? Given the popularity of the introductory classes, the high demand for those classes and the outstanding instructors in Spanish and Italian in the first-year classes, it is a sure bet that careful crafting of the undergraduate program, with well-designed bridge courses to upper-year offerings, be they literature, cultural, arts or language oriented, will lead to a larger number of program majors. With resource support from the Faculty, this can

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practice for both languages taught in the department, it would also be highly desirable to improve the language lab facilities. Bringing lab B up to the standards of lab A would require money, but it would benefit all language departments.

Study abroad can be an important component in the undergraduate (as well as the graduate) program; immersion is doubtless the most effective way to acquire advanced oral skills. As discussed in Prof. Kirk's report, the Faculty and International Programs Office should work with the department to develop flexible study abroad options for students in the Spanish and Italian programs. The Review Team feels that some effort to expand the study abroad possibilities would be beneficial to the undergraduate program. The university is signing agreements of cooperation with Spanish-speaking universities and this might be a vehicle for further collaboration. Creative possibilities should be explored. An example would be students teaching ESL at host institutions as a way to offset costs of study abroad.

The Graduate program

The MA program has been of good quality. Given the expertise of the faculty members, the department is well positioned to offer a graduate program, and the graduates have been well placed in a variety of advanced graduate programs and occupations. But the future of the graduate (MA) program in Spanish is a major concern of both external reviewers, because it faces several major challenges. The Review Team agrees with the external reviewers that the basic problems associated with the graduate program are the insufficiency of faculty resources and the structure of the program. We recognize that the undergraduate and graduate programs, taken together, complement each other from an academic and intellectual viewpoint. The success of the graduate program is important to the overall academic focus and output of the department. The Team therefore strongly recommends that the MA program be maintained and strengthened, in the ways outlined below.

First, as with all graduate programs, the program is not sustainable without sufficient faculty resources. The MA program is not sustainable without the expansion of faculty resources beyond its current small core. The Review Team is of the view that increasing the faculty complement as recommended would permit the department to continue to successfully offer an MA degree program.

Second, the MA program is currently available in three different patterns of requirements, the main differences among them being whether or not a thesis is required; and, if a thesis route is chosen, then there are two choices that differ in the number of courses required and the extent of the thesis requirement. The value of having the distinctions represented by these three patterns of requirements, especially with regard to the different types of MA theses, is not apparent. Given the small size of the graduate program, a single model for an MA would focus the graduate curriculum and provide efficiencies. The Committee recommends that the department offer only one MA structure: an MA with courses and a thesis requirement. The Committee further recommends that the department form a committee to consider the most appropriate form of the thesis and decide the number of course credits that the thesis will count towards the degree.

There has also been some concern expressed over course offerings at the graduate

meet with all faculty during a period of training, this w

and we hope the IAR will help bring about the stability needed to facilitate such initiatives, which will benefit the department in the long run.

Dr. Kirk's suggestion of an Italian Studies program seems idealistic at this time; the Department needs to focus on keeping the Italian medial alive. Other possibilities should be investigated on the undergraduate level (e.g. Post-colonial Studies, Mediterranean Studies). The degree of departmental autonomy that is a Queen's tradition stands in the way of the easy establishing of inter-disciplinary programs, but as SLAS and other SPFs demonstrate, it is not undoable. We recommend revisiting SLAS together with the heads of departments involved to search for new ways to overcome problems with caps and prerequisites for students from cognate departments.

On the graduate level the department students should have access to courses in other departments; the department could also fruitfully participate in current efforts to establish a Cultural Studies program. In view of Queen's international vision, the School of Business and the International Study Centre would seem obvious venues for outreach through teaching.

Individual faculty members have been active in reaching out and creating an intellectual atmosphere in and around the department (e.g. Dr. Chamberlain's work with the International Comparative Literature Association and Mexican connections; Dr. Mennell's Cuban connections which should provide an important entry to Latin America, and Dr. Santeramo's Italian days) and such initiatives are greatly valued. More could be done, however, to establish connections with Latin American—and Mediterranean--interests in other departments and across faculties. Dr. Mennell's collaborative SSHRC grant could be a model for potential 'clusters' of the reses in

Recommendations:

1. **Hire additional faculty.** Ideally four appointments should be made, one of them a specialist in language pedagogy. At a minimum the two lost positions should be reinstated immediately as tenure-track positions.
2. **Establish a strategic plan to ensure an undergraduate curriculum that guarantees “intellectual coherence and rigor”:**
 - i) establish a “clear path” through four years of language training, including a fourth-year advanced language course
 - ii) cap class sizes for language courses
 - iii) facilitate study abroad
3. **Strengthen MA program:**
 - i) reduce the options to one path, consisting of courses and a thesis
 - ii) streamline and focus regular course offerings
 - iii) provide more information regarding course offerings and Teaching Fellowship or Assistant duties before students arrive on campus
 - iv) facilitate study abroad by allowing students to retain a half TA or TF if away for one term and by investigating possibilities of funding at host institutions (e.g. ESL teaching)
4. **Improve mentoring and training of TAs and TFs.**
 - i) ensure that incoming students receive adequate training before stepping into the classroom and mentor TAs and TFs through their work
 - ii) establish and communicate a clear rationale for assigning Teaching Assistantships and Teaching Fellowships (if possible assign TAs in first year and TFs in second year).
5. **Improve communication between students (undergraduate and graduate) and faculty**
 - i) ensure students are elected to appropriate decision-making committees; in the case of graduate students