

Final Assessment Report Academic Review

Applied Linguistics

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on February 9, 2012.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Marlise Horst (Concordia University) and Marc Pell (McGill University), and an internal reviewer, Coral Mitchell (Education, Graduate and Undergraduate).
3. The site visit occurred on February 29-March 2, 2012.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 2, 2012.
5. The Department's response was received on May 22, 2012.
6. The Dean of Humanities' response from Douglas Kneale was received on June 5, 2012.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies' response from Mike Plyley was received on September 17, 2012.

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

BA (Honours) in Applied Linguistics/Teaching English as a Subsequent Language (TESL)
Hearing Sciences and Speech and Language Sciences
BA (Honours) in Applied Linguistics/TESL with Co-op option
BA with Major in Speech and Language Sciences
BA (Pass) in Applied Linguistics, Hearing Sciences, and Speech and Language Sciences
Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics (TESL)
Certificates in Hearing Sciences, Speech and Language Sciences and TESL

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

The reviewers assigned the undergraduate program an Outcome Category 3, "Good Quality with Concerns" and the graduate program an Outcome Category 2, "Good Quality".

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the dual character of the undergraduate program as unique in Canada, saying, “It is indeed unusual for TESL undergraduates to study alongside students in the speech-language pathology and audiology streams and this offers undergraduates in both [programs] an usually rich exposure to wider perspectives in Applied Linguistics.” They also stated that “The fact that DALs students have ... completed courses that touch on clinical issues sets these students apart from their Canadian peers when applying to graduate programs in Canada.”

The reviewers noted that the programs “are being delivered effectively according to several important metrics”. They referred to “[t]he fact that these programs largely succeed in meeting their enrollment quotas”, the positive survey data on student satisfaction, and the high “rate of acceptance for graduate studies” as evidence of good quality.

All six of the degree level expectations for the programs were seen to be outlined in “clear and precise language in the self-study” and were deemed “appropriate” and “consistent with both the university’s articulation of this objective and our own understanding of what deep and broad knowledge entails in the field of Applied Linguistics.” The reviewers were satisfied that learning objectives were being met in the undergraduate program.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided seven discrete recommendations:

1. Move DALs from the Faculty of Humanities to the Faculty of Social Sciences.
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In its response, the Department stated that “Most members support this recommendation” and requested that the Provost “initiate discussions among the department, the Dean of Humanities, and the Dean of Social Sciences to determine the most appropriate academic fit for our interdisciplinary work”.

The Faculty Dean responded that he was “open to discussions about the placement of DALs within the University” and that he respected “the Department’s desire to initiate discussion regarding its future academic home”.

The Dean of Graduate Studies supported the recommendation, suggesting that “there is also reason to explore the possibility of a move to Applied Health Sciences, especially if the Unit wishes to explore the possibility of Speech and Language Pathology down the road.”

The Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) suggested that this move would be “a huge shift in ideological premises”, and that the department should create a “sound plan of action and a timeline that will allow a smooth transition”.

ARC considers this recommendation to require further consideration. It is not clear that the academic advantages to any possible re-location (whether to Social Sciences, Education or Applied Health Sciences) have been identified, or that the possible impacts on students have been evaluated. Therefore, ARC requests that the Provost initiate discussions with the Department and the Deans of relevant Faculties.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation under consideration.

2. Hire two new tenure-track faculty members in the area of Speech/Language/Hearing Sciences.

The Department strongly endorsed this recommendation, suggesting that, “Successful implementation of other Recommendations will depend on speedy recruitment of these hires.”

The Faculty Dean stated that he was “sympathetic to this recommendation”, but made it clear that the program was not operating under resource pressures which were unique to the department, nor indeed the Faculty or University at this time. Due to budgetary constraints, the reviewers were explicitly instructed to “proceed under the assumption that there would be no new hires in the near term in Applied Linguistics” and these instructions were given to the reviewers of other programs under review at the same time.

The Dean of Graduate Studies urged the Unit “to review what it wants to be, and where it wants to go” in order to “make any decision about future appointments”.

While ARC acknowledges the challenges faced by the Department in terms of faculty resources, it is understood that this issue cannot be addressed until the discussion regarding recommendation #1 is completed. ARC deems the recommendation to provide these resources to the program to be worthy of consideration and acknowledges that there are existing processes and policies for negotiation of these arrangements, which lie outside ARC’s area of responsibility. ARC expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible parties:	Chair, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for resources:	Chair, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Chair, Dean of Humanities
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

3. Organize a faculty retreat focused on curricular renewal of undergraduate programs.

The Department welcomed this Recommendation as a constructive invitation “to build on existing program strengths and implement further improvements”, but noted that “effective enactment...would be severely undermined in the absence of action on Recommendation 2 (hiring).”

The Faculty Dean reiterated that additional staffing “simply cannot be forthcoming” and that the Department would benefit from considering the reviewers’ suggestions for “a substantial number of changes to the degree programs in the Department” as more than a “constructive invitation”. The Dean stated that he was “not satisfied that the Department has indicated sufficient commitment to revising its program to answer the reservations and meet the recommendations of the reviewers and to make more effective use of the human resources at its disposal.” He went on to note that the Department will need to also respond to reviewer concerns, “regarding the apparent reluctance of at least of a portion of its faculty members to teach outside a narrow range of courses.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that a Unit retreat would be helpful to address “issues that pertain to both the undergraduate and graduate programs.” He encouraged the Unit to consider two of the reviewers suggestions which would impact the graduate program as part of the retreat. One concerned “review[ing] the TESL graduate curriculum to ensure that courses expose students to a wide variety of current topics”. The second concerned adding “more tasks in the W category (e.g. work with data sets, case studies, computer tools) and T category (i.e. tests)” to assignments in the MA program in order to diversify them. The Dean also stated that he would “strongly urge the Unit to have a professional facilitator involved in the organization and running of the retreat.”

UPC expressed support for “creating new curricular options as long as the eventual program adhered to degree program specifications and created appropriate transition and sequencing strategies for students”. The Committee noted that “internal flexibilities will likely be required in the short term” in order to accomplish this.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. It is ARC's view that the curriculum review should also address Recommendation 4 and include graduate programs (and thus address Recommendation 5 as well).

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2013/14

4. Merge the undergraduate programs in Speech and Language Sciences and Hearing Sciences and corresponding Certificate programs to simplify program delivery.

The Department stated that their members generally concurred with the Report’s observation and that they could address this recommendation as part of the retreat proposed in Recommendation 3”. The Department added that such a change in programs would “require students to select electives very carefully” which would require “a more effective system for undergraduate program advising” as per Recommendation 6.

The Faculty Dean responded that he would encourage the Department to act on this recommendation, but added that “additional advising should not be particularly onerous.”

UPC stated that it “saw some merit in simplifying delivery and reducing redundancies and addressing internal workload issues”. It went on to note that “such a merge would also necessitate considerations of implications for after degree program applications”.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted, and believes that it should be addressed as part of a broad curriculum review of both undergraduate and graduate programs (see Recommendation #3).

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2013/14

5. Implement a Coursework Only path in the MA in Applied Linguistics as an additional option to the Major Research Paper and Thesis paths.

In its response, the Department stated that “There is now broad support for a coursework-only path to complement the MRP and thesis paths in the MA program”. The Department noted that “since new hires could have a ripple effect across the department - action on Recommendation 2 (hiring) will doubtless be crucial for implementation of Recommendation 5, too.”

The Faculty Dean stated that this “is a reasonable suggestion that the Department should consider” which would serve students “whose aim is to become practitioners rather than researchers”. He cautioned that “the Department would have to make decisions about the necessary allocation of existing resources to make this option possible since, as noted previously, additional staffing is not forthcoming in the near future.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that he “would strongly encourage the Program to add this path to the existing Program”, and suggested that “the Program examine the possibilities for students to cross over from one route to another seamlessly”.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted, and believes that it should be addressed as part of a broad curriculum review of both undergraduate and graduate programs (see recommendation #3).

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Deans of Humanities and Graduate Studies to report by end of academic year 2013/14

6. Develop effective method for providing accurate and timely program advice to undergraduate students.

The Department stated that they agreed that “better advising resources are essential” and that suggestions for “special workshops”, “Advising Days”, and enhancement of LingNet (advising resources on the DALs website) were “promising-looking” options. Some members suggested that a “departmental advising position with course relief” be restored.

The Faculty Dean stated that “A course release for a faculty member is currently not an option”. He went on to encourage the Department to “pursue strategies for advising along the lines of those suggested in the reviewers’ report and in the Department’s self-study.” He suggested that “Given the relatively small number of electives and choices available” it should not be very complicated to provide options for advising which could be, for example, in electronic form.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

7. The University should deploy necessary resources (e.g., experts from Human Resources, Faculty Development personnel, external consultants) to restore a working culture in DALs devoted to respectful dialogue and teambuilding.

The Department concurred with this recommendation, suggesting that the proposed mediation process “be developed in collaboration with the department, so as to promote confidence and engagement.” They proposed “an outside team with professional expertise in interpersonal relations in the academic context (e.g. under Employee Assistance Plan), or a small committee comprising at least one Brock academic and one other professional in interpersonal relations.”

The Faculty Dean fully supported this recommendation, and encouraged the Department to consult with Human Resources and the Human Rights and Equity Services Office “about resources that are available to assist DALs in restoring a professional and respectful departmental culture.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies concurred.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted, and in the process of implementation. It is ARC’s view that restoring a positive working culture is foundational to the Department’s consideration of the other recommendations.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2013/14

D. Recommendations to be Implemented

The IQAP requires that ARC “set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation.” Using the specific ARC proposals enunciated above, the following priorities are proposed:

First Priority:

Recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Second Priority

Recommendation 6.

Under Consideration

Recommendation 1.

E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented

Recommendation 2.