

Final Assessment Report

Modern Languages, Literatures and Culture

Undergraduate Programs

(reviewed 2024/25)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self-Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee October 24, 2024.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Katherine Roberts (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Donato Santeramo (Queen's University), and one internal reviewer, Anthony Kinik (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred January 9-10, 2025.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received February 20, 2025.
5. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received March 12, 2025.
6. The Department response was received March 24, 2025.
7. The Dean, Faculty of Humanities, response was received April 4, 2025.
8. Annual Implementation Reports will be submitted from 2026-2029.
9. The next Cyclical Academic Review is scheduled to take place in 2032/2033.

The Self-Study was prepared under the conditions of the Codicil with the Review and responses conducted under the terms and conditions of the June 2023 IQAP.

Program Outcome Categories:

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Committee gave the programs the following Outcome Categories:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA (Honours) in French Studies		X		
BA Combined (Honours) in Hispanic and Latin American Studies			X	
BA Combined (Honours) in Italian Studies			X	
BA (Pass) in French Studies		X		
BA (Pass) in Hispanic and Latin American Studies			X	
<i>If you have chosen 'Good Quality with Concerns', please summarize the specific concern(s) briefly below. If you have chosen 'Non-Viable', please summarize the specific reason(s) below.</i>				
For the BA in Hispanic and Latin American Studies and the BA in Italian, the committee feels that the programs do not have enough FT faculty members to assure the quality of the programs. Recently departed or retired faculty must be replaced for these programs to continue.				

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

As in most departments at universities, in Ontario, MLLC at Brock is experiencing a high level of uncertainty. As a department, it would seem, however, that some of the crisis could be alleviated with a different approach in offering the programs. Several issues need to be addressed. Firstly, the number of contract faculty at 70%+ is not only an anomaly for universities in Ontario (and, for that matter, in North America) but also pedagogically unsound. Even worse, the students we met in person (5) (all from the French program) lamented the 3-hour weekly time slot for course delivery. A few commented that at times (every other week), a fourth hour was added. Furthermore, with most instructors teaching three-hour slots, there is little to no time to offer extracurricular activities. This is not the case with Full-Time faculty who are present and interact with the students outside of the classroom and, as we shall see, have organized important experiential learning within the Brock community.

That said, it is worthy of note that the faculty are truly committed to the program even though, and rightly so, they feel they are not supported by the administration adequately. For example, it is absolutely crucial that the Full-Time faculty retirees be replaced. This should not be a burden on the administration as the hire would be at the Assistant Professor level and thus would actually generate some savings. Finally, we suggest that revenue could be generated by creating (more) courses, both offered by the specific programs and, more importantly, courses that count towards a credit for all or most of the programs (e.g. Thematic based courses like Romanticism, Representation of Food in Cinema, Representation of Otherness in Literature, etc.). These courses should be high enrollment, capped at 100/150 students.

B. Program Strengths

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

The greatest strength of the department is its Full-Time and Part-Time faculty who offer diverse and interesting courses. The instructors are very dedicated to their programs and almost all of them to the department. Their commitment to their students is noteworthy. We also would like to mention the interesting course offerings and the extracurricular activities offered by instructors from most programs. Finally, the Department's Chair, Carmela Colella, has been doing a superb job, given the lack of resources and internal challenges.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1: In your normal advocacy with your Dean for new positions, consider prioritizing the following: hiring of a full-time Faculty in the area of Quebec/French Canada with an interest in Indigenous literature and culture in French.

Supporting/clarifying text: The French section must have a FT faculty member in Quebec/French Canadian Studies to complete the curriculum and fulfill the University's mandate in this area.

The Department responded:

It is to be noted that a request for an Indigenous scholar in Canadian Francophone literature was first requested in 2021 and every year since then. French Studies acknowledges that this position responds to students' needs and interests and would fulfill a gap in the Program.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean approves of this recommendation, noting that the Department has put together a very good proposal for the position described. The proposal forms part of the Dean's planning for necessary positions in the Faculty of Humanities. The timeline for the prioritization (the real action word in the recommendation) is immediate, in that it has already been done.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. Although the allocation of resources lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee ARC expects that the Department will continue to advocate through available channels, as they have done, for positions. Noting that this recommendation is linked to #2.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #2: In your normal advocacy with your Dean for new positions, consider prioritizing the replacement of retiring faculty in German and Italian and the replacement of departed faculty in Spanish.

Supporting/clarifying text: Replacement of faculty is essential to ensure the quality of the programs in the future.

The Department responded:

MLLC will work to draft a posting for the needed positions in ITAL, GERM and HILA and will explore the possibility of shared positions (ITAL/GERM; HILA/GERM; ITAL/HILA). The Department is cognizant of the current financial pressures faced by the University and requests continued support for PTI stipends for the above-mentioned Programs as these are fundamental to their program delivery.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean's Office will be pleased to see proposals made for replacement positions in these language areas. Such proposals should include data about recent enrolments and trends, as well as information about future plans for the programmes in question. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be a short term one, as calls for position proposals usually come in the late summer or early fall.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. Although the allocation of resources lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee ARC expects that the Department will continue to advocate through available channels, as they have done, for positions. This recommendation is linked to #1.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
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Recommendation #3: Expand upon the existing oral component of all courses, particularly in French.

Supporting/clarifying text: Dedicating more class time to discussion and/or having smaller breakout sessions or tutorials (labs) supervised by advanced undergraduates (Instructional Assistants) could increase opportunities for sorely needed oral practice.

The Department responded:

MLLC and in particular the French Studies Program, in collaboration with the Curriculum Committee, will study and work on modifying existing courses and creating new courses to expand the oral component. In order to provide additional oral courses, support and financial resources are essential.

In 2021, French Studies modified its first- and second-year language courses to include an hour dedicated to oral practice; upper-year courses are capped to facilitate class discussion in French; the Department organizes a weekly Conversation Hour for all its Program languages, where on average 5 to 6 students attend regularly.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean approves this recommendation, while also noting the progress the Department has made so far in this direction. Speaking the languages and interacting orally is an important component of learning modern languages. This is especially important in the French programme, where so many students are heading for teaching the language. I anticipate the timeline for this will be a medium term one.

The Undergraduate Programs Committee responded:

The UPC Committee noted that Recommendations 3, 5, 8 are related to revising and adding courses. This work will come to the UPC Committee.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to engage the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) as it considers how best to expand upon the existing oral component of all courses.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
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Recommendation #4: Work more closely with the appropriate members of higher Administration to make the programs more visible to students applying directly from High School through the OUAC system. Also make sure the programs are properly documented.
<i>Supporting/clarifying text: Incoming students are not aware of the programs offered by MLLC. The department needs more support from the University in terms of how it gathers data to verify student satisfaction with the programs.</i>

The Department responded:

MLLC welcomes the opportunity to work with Administration, in particular with Recruitment and Student Services to make all of its Programs more visible. The Chair will engage in conversation with the Associate Dean to request assistance to strategize how best to move forward.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean’s Office approves this recommendation and is both available and eager to work with the Department and the Office of the Registrar and Enrollment Services to improve the visibility of language programmes in the application systems. I anticipate the timeline for starting this work to be very short term indeed.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Department in consultation with the Dean’s office and the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Services is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #5: The committee recommends offering courses in twice-per-week slots of 1.5 hours instead of 3 hours.

Supporting/clarifying text: Some courses conform to this time slot. It was remarked that scheduling courses in a 3-hour block made it easier to recruit PT Faculty who might have to travel long distances to campus. However, the committee did speak to PT Faculty that live locally and who welcomed the twice-per-week model.

The Department responded:

MLLC agrees that a twice per week teaching pattern would be ideal for all language courses, however, this is not always possible due to timetabling limitations and PTI availability. The Curriculum Committee will be tasked to review the course offerings to determine if there are timetabling strategies that can support this recommendation. It should also be noted that, pedagogically for some courses 2x1.5 hrs is not an effective teaching pattern. The Chair will discuss with Scheduling strategies for course timetabling and request more flexibility in late timetable changes.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean supports this recommendation, having found in teaching languages in recent years that smaller chunks of time are more effective. I strongly encourage the Department to give this careful consideration. I anticipate the timeline to be a medium term one.

The Undergraduate Programs Committee responded:

The UPC Committee noted that Recommendations 3, 5, 8 are related to revising and adding courses. This work will come to the UPC Committee.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee believes that the Department, in consultation with the Dean's Office and Scheduling, is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to review and adjust course offerings.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #6: The MLLC should establish a time in May every year for a face-to-face annual retreat to discuss the progress of the students in each program and to address any issues concerning meeting program objectives.

Supporting/clarifying text: As stated above, this annual retreat would be useful to discuss program objectives and build collegiality across the sections. The day could be divided into 1) program-specific meetings in each target language followed by 2) a department-wide discussion/comparison of the programs and any other issues facing the department.

The Department responded:

MLLC will add this topic to its annual year-end full-time faculty retreat and/or include this conversation during the review and approval of UPC submission. To be noted that in French Studies a year-debriefing with part-time instructors does occur, while in HILA, ITAL and GERM conversation with part-time instructors is on-going throughout the year.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The Dean fully supports the recommendation of an end-of-year review meeting. These can help considerably with planning, as well as departmental cohesion. I anticipate that this will have a short-term implementation timeline.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to review its program objectives and student progression within the context of a larger curriculum review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #7: Increase enrollments in the first-year French language courses. Streamline enrollment caps on first-year Spanish, Italian and German courses. Offer thematic courses that may count for the degree in all programs. Offer high enrollment courses.

Supporting/clarifying text: This would allow faculty to offer 3rd and 4th-year content courses, thus reducing reliance on PT faculty. High enrollment courses could generate revenue for the department and help reduce the reliance on PT Faculty.

The Department responded:

MLLC is unsure how an increase in first-year class enrollments in language courses will benefit the overall linguistic objectives of the programs, especially in light of the fact that it has been suggested in the report that more time be allocated to oral proficiency.

Furthermore, increasing the year-one language courses caps will not contribute to freeing up resources for full-time faculty to teach in upper-year courses.

MLLC is committed to equity in language class size across all programs in language courses and to ensuring that the first-year student experience in language courses is a positive one. The purpose-built language lab has a capacity of 31, which is ideal for first- and second-year language courses. Administrative support is needed to ensure that class sizes are equitable across all languages and to ensure the successful dissemination of aural, oral, reading, and writing skills for students.

The Department would like to highlight that many high schools in Ontario no longer offer German, Italian or Spanish as electives. This shift has significantly impacted GERM, HILA, and ITAL, as students typically discover these programs only after arriving at Brock and enrolling in MLLC first-year language courses. The Department strongly believes that ensuring equity in both language class sizes and the first-year student pool for German, Italian, and Spanish is important and fundamental to their continued success.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

This is a multi-faceted recommendation. The Dean encourages the Department to explore (perhaps at an end-of-year retreat) possibilities for holding some introductory language courses with larger enrolments: How would that be accomplished? What are the limitations? Are the limits different for on-line courses (where language lab size is not a factor)?

It is not clear what “streamline enrollment caps on first-year Spanish, Italian and German courses” means, and the clarifying text does not clarify. The Dean encourages the Department to consider high-enrolment courses that will have significant popularity across the campus population. With multiple recommendations framed as one recommendation, anticipating a timeline for implementation is almost impossible.

The Undergraduate Programs Committee responded:

The committee discussed recommendation #7 (Increase enrollments in the first-year French language courses). Based on the understanding that this recommendation includes offering thematic courses spanning across Spanish, French, German and Italian (i.e. “count for the degree in all programs”) and position them as higher enrollment, the committee does not see an issue with the recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee believes that the Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to consider first year enrolments within the context of a larger curriculum review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #8: Restructure the BA in French in order to offer more courses in French and Francophone culture.

Supporting/clarifying text: The committee feels that the BA in French is too heavily literature-based. Given that the majority of the majors in the department are destined for teaching French in the Niagara region, the committee felt that a focus on covering the centuries of the French canon (e.g. from the Middle Ages to Contemporary French Literature) is misplaced. The students would benefit from courses in French/Quebec culture (music, cinema, etc.) giving them insights and materials to use in their own classrooms in the future.

The Department responded:

The French Studies Program will meet to review their course offerings and present suggestions to the Curriculum Committee for input. Preliminary ideas and suggestions include restructuring courses thematically and adding a second-year poetry and music course. It should be noted that the French Studies Program already has several courses on French and Francophone culture (FREN 2F03 – Literature and Culture: The French-Speaking World; FREN 2P55 – Francophone Cultures and Civilizations; FREN 2P65 – Culture and Civilization of France to 1800; 3P65 – Culture and Civilization of France from 1800 to the Present; 3P95 – French Literature and Culture in Film) and recently added a second/third-year course, 2Q92 - From Pop to Hip-hop, on Francophone music and culture. In upper-year courses, students engage with literature, music, cinema, etc., and are encouraged to develop these materials for future use. Pedagogically, literature is a key component of culture broadly understood and therefore is one of many tools used by the Program to teach and engage with students.

The Dean of Humanities responded:

The recommendation is that the Department “restructure” the BA in French. The Dean prefers to request that the Department review the BA in French to offer a greater focus on French and Francophone culture. I anticipate that this would have a medium-term implementation timeline.

The Undergraduate Programs Committee responded:

The UPC Committee noted that Recommendations 3, 5, 8 are related to revising and adding courses. This work will come to the UPC Committee.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee believes that the Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to restructure the BA in French within the context of a larger curriculum review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations: 1-8