

**Simon Fraser University
Memorandum**

S.00-73

TO: Senate
FROM: J.M. Munro, Vice-President, Academic
DATE: August 16, 2000
SUBJECT: External Review - Department of French

External Reviews of academic units are conducted under Guidelines¹ approved by Senate. The review process is intended to ensure that the quality of the department's academic programs and research is high, that members of the department participate in the administration of departments, and that the departmental environment is conducive to the department's objectives. Under these Guidelines, Senate is expected to receive advice from the new Senate Committee on University Priorities and to provide feedback to the unit and the Dean.

The following materials are forwarded to Senate for consideration:

- The External Review Report
- The response to the External Review Report by the Department
- The comments of the Dean
- The comments of the Vice-President, Academic
- The recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities

The Department Chair, Dr. Guy Poirier will be available at Senate as a resource person.

Motion

That Senate concurs with the recommendation from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the Department of French on priority items resulting from the external review, as outlined in S. 00 - 73



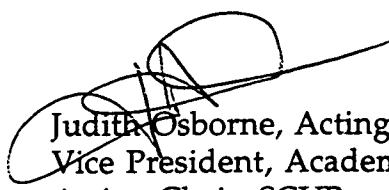
¹ The Guidelines can be found at:
<http://www.reg.sfu.ca/Senate/SenateComms/SCUP-ExReview.html>

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Senate Committee on University Priorities

Memorandum

TO: Senate

FROM:  Judith Osborne, Acting
Vice President, Academic
Acting Chair, SCUP

RE: Department of French
External Review

DATE: 12 July 2000

The Senate Committee on University Priorities has reviewed the External Review Report prepared on the Department of French May 6, 1999, together with the response from the Department and comments from the Dean and the Vice President, Academic.

SCUP recommends to Senate that the Department and Dean be advised to pursue the following as priority items:

1. The Department of French should develop a comprehensive plan to work toward increasing enrolment in the Master's program to 10 full-time equivalent students. The Plan should be sent to the Dean and to SCUP for information with an update back to SCUP by September 1, 2001. SCUP further recommends that as part of this plan, the Department of French undertake the following initiatives: (a) review and improve its current recruitment strategy, emphasizing program streams and career options outside of teaching; (b) evaluate whether the Department's focus is attractive to prospective graduate students; and, (c) introduce more graduate funding opportunities, particularly through an increase in the number of Teaching Assistantships.
2. The Department of French should improve its collaboration with other academic units, particularly the Faculty of Education and other language Departments, for both graduate and undergraduate programming. The Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Education should also develop plans for better co-operation between their Faculties.

.../2

3. The Department of French should work to achieve greater integration of language instruction in the overall curriculum. This includes redefinition of courses and pedagogy and greater emphasis on language skills throughout the curriculum. It also requires a consideration of the evolving nature of new technologies in support of language teaching. The Department of French should re-deploy faculty resources to effectively support these recommended changes.
4. The Department of French, in conjunction with the Dean of Arts and other language Departments, should conduct an administrative review of language learning services within the Department and Faculty. Such a review should consider ways in which French language teaching can be integrated with other language teaching and how the French Language Lab and the Language Learning Centre can be integrated to offer the most effective language teaching facilities in the Faculty of Arts. (The Faculty of Arts should evaluate the technical support needs of all Departments and, if necessary, address any deficiencies.)

c. G. Poirier
J. Pierce

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President, Academic

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Committee on
University PrioritiesFROM: J.M. Munro,
Vice President, AcademicSUBJECT: External Review, Department
of French

DATE: June 7, 2000

The report of the External Review Committee of the Department of French was submitted on May 6, 1999 following the review visit on February 25-27, 1999. The Department offered to respond in the fall of 1999 but they were asked to delay their response until the new Senate Guidelines for External Reviews were in place. The response of the Department was submitted to the Dean of Arts on March 27, 2000 and the Dean's comments were forwarded on April 26, 2000.

My comments on this external review and the submissions from the Department and Dean are as follows.

1. This is a concise, thoughtful, and useful review and is one that could serve as an example for review committees in the future. The review presented a fundamentally positive view of the Department of French and their encouraging perspective on the Department - for example, their praise for the integration of language, literature, and linguistics - appears to have been appreciated in the Departmental response. There are differences between the Department's and the Dean's views on certain issues such as language pedagogy and teaching facilities with the Dean generally being more in agreement with the reviewers than the Department.
2. The reviewers' advice concerning faculty renewal and the closer integration of all complement teaching staff seems sound. The Department appears to be undertaking one part of this process in its revision of its language courses - further work would be advisable. The Dean's comments suggest a way in which the effective integration of French language teaching can be integrated with other language teaching in the Faculty of Arts through the Language Learning Centre. It should be possible to accomplish this without compromising the

importance of these courses for the major program in French. From the Dean's comments, it seems unlikely that the Departmental request for a major renovation and re-equipment of the French Language Training Centre will be successful. Thus, the Department of French and the Dean's office must reach agreement on how to provide suitable learning services through other facilities

3. The matter of co-operation between the Department of French and the Faculty of Education has long been a matter of concern. The University should be able to find ways of effectively promoting improved collaboration between these two units, both of whose programs would seem to be able to benefit from this. Perhaps the Deans of Arts and Education should be charged to develop plans for better co-operation.

4. The Department's undergraduate program has stable enrollments and is obviously offering learning opportunities that are appreciated by enough students to raise no concerns about its long term viability. Even so, the efforts of the Chair and Department to broaden the community connections of the Department of French are to be commended.

5. The graduate program has fewer students this year than in the year of the review - enrollment is well below the ten specified by the reviewers as the minimum viable level. (This target is itself at the very low end of graduate program size across the University.) The Department response notes that the size of graduate programs fluctuates but it is the case that small programs need to avoid fluctuation that takes them below the minimum viable level. The measures underway and proposed by the Department are an appropriate response to this problem; their success will be important for the Department.

6. Both the reviewers and the Department misunderstand the process by which funding for equipment finds its way to departments. Equipment budgets are allocated by the Vice President, Academic to Faculties, not to departments, and it is the Dean's prerogative to allocate these funds. The fundamental considerations in allocation of equipment budgets are the needs for start-up funding for new faculty members and the distribution of weighted FTEs across the Faculties. In some cases, special equipment allocations are made at the University level but this comprises a relatively minor amount of centrally-provided equipment funding. All Faculties generate funds internally from salary fall-out which are then available for such purposes as equipment purchase.



cc. G. Poirier
J. Pierce

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE DEAN
FACULTY OF ARTS

MEMORANDUM

To: Jock Munro
VP Academic

From: John T. Pierce
Dean of Arts

Subject: French Department's
External Review

Date: April 26, 2000

This was, on the whole, a very positive review for the Department of French. The program and faculty are very good and with some minor adjustments, significant improvements could be encouraged in both. I have structured my comments into three thematic categories - strategic planning, curriculum and pedagogical reform and renewal.

1. Strategic Planning:

The review implied steps in a number of areas that are critically linked and should be considered together by the department in order to establish a coherent and feasible plan for the next few years. Particularly important in this connection are the areas of curricular and pedagogical reform, and faculty renewal. These will be dealt with separately below. The department should take stock of their audience of students, why they take French, and what they use it for after graduation. The goals and interests of students may inform the planning of future directions, and provide insights that could lead to a plan to reverse the downward trend in enrollment evident over the past several years.

Another area that requires collective study and resolve in the department is the collaboration between the department and other units in the University. The review mentions cooperation with Education and other language departments; the process of implementation of the recommendations of this review should include a careful consideration of the options in this area. Clearly, the training of French teachers requires close collaboration with the Faculty of Education, and the department should work to enhance this relationship. Likewise, the joint development of language programming initiatives and infrastructure should be a priority of the department, because of the economies that can be achieved by interdepartmental efforts in these areas.

Finally, the department should carefully consider the future of the graduate program. The review was clear in saying that it is currently below the critical mass of active students. An examination of application patterns and comparison with other French departments should be undertaken to determine if a general drop in demand for graduate degrees is the cause, or if a particular reorientation of focus might attract more students. The department should also consider more extensive use of TAs for graduate students in place of other forms of instructional support over the long term, and attempt to increase the amount of graduate student support generated by external research grants. The department should consider setting a target date by which an increase to 10 students should be achieved.

2. Curriculum and pedagogical reform:

The department makes clear that it is committed to the three-fold structure of its curriculum (language, literature, and linguistics). Nonetheless, the review makes it apparent that there are some efficiencies that need to be considered in order for that curriculum to function well for students, particularly in assuring that needed courses are available for degree completion. The department should move quickly to implement reforms, as this can be done without further resources.

The reviewers call for greater integration of language instruction in the overall curriculum. There are two dimensions to this proposal: 1) redefinition of courses and pedagogy, and 2) greater emphasis on language skills throughout the curriculum. In both these aspects, the department should consider redeploying faculty resources to reflect this emphasis. For example, senior members of the department could become more involved in the teaching of language, and the skills of some of the language lecturers could be utilized in upper-division content courses. While the calendar descriptions of courses may not need to be rewritten, the implementation of the course content could be structured to take the need for ongoing language training into account more explicitly.

The migration to new technologies in support of language teaching is taking place across the entire range of languages offered at the University. This will significantly inform the evolution of language course offerings. The department should take steps now to begin the curricular reform that is needed to enable the inclusion of French courses in this direction. This is an important area where sharing of resources may be necessary, and this process should be coordinated as much as possible with other languages in the university. This is an area where the call for interdepartmental collaboration in the review is important.

The French Department is to be complimented for the development of the Centre for Francophone Studies. This should assist in establishing important research links both internal and external to the University.

3. Renewal:

The review points out that there are no retirements in French until 2003, but does recommend that the department dedicate that position to a specialist in applied linguistics, who could also oversee the language program. This has been an unfulfilled recruiting goal of the department in the past, and should be the top priority for the next hire. This is a key position if the recommendation of better integration of language teaching into the department's curriculum is to be followed. If bridging monies can be secured it will move forward the date of appointment of the applied linguist.

The department's stated desire for technical support and dedicated language laboratory facilities is of secondary importance in the resource picture. There is no reason why these needs cannot be fully satisfied by shared facilities and personnel. The department should seek to deal with these points by means of closer collaboration with other departments. Presently the Dean's office is reviewing resources available to the Language Training Institute and reviewing the administrative structure of the Language Learning Centre. Both of these initiatives will, in our view, positively impact access to French language training.



/s/



MEMORANDUM

To: Tom Perry,
Associate Dean of Arts

From: Guy Poirier, Chair
Department of French

Handwritten initials, possibly "G.P.", in dark ink.

Re: Department of French 1999
External Review

Date: March 27, 2000

Tom:

As requested, you will find here enclosed the Response of the Department of French to the External Reviewers' Report.

This document was unanimously approved at the March 23, 2000 General Meeting of the Department of French.

Sincerely,

Guy Poirier

Cc: John Pierce, Dean of Arts ✓

Encl.

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
MAR 27 2000
FACULTY OF ARTS

1999 Department of French External Review

Response of the Department of French to the external reviewers' report

This response was approved unanimously at the March 23, 2000 Department of French General meeting

1. Introduction

We agree with the reviewers that the tri-partite nature of our program makes our Department distinctive and unique in Western Canada. Moreover, such distinctiveness should, in fact, be nurtured and, before the next external review, receive financial support from the Faculty of Arts and the University, especially in the areas of Faculty renewal, new technology, and renovation projects.

2. Teaching personnel and Faculty renewal

The reviewers mentioned, on page 8 of their report, that they concur with our request for the restoration of the fourth position in Linguistics, and believe it is intellectually justified both from a program and research point of view. We, of course, maintain our request.

A way to secure Faculty renewal in the Department of French would be to follow a steady but monitored pattern of hiring for the next decade. An acceptable appointment/retirement sequence for the next three-year plan would be:

September 2000: Search approved for Tenure Track Faculty Appointment

September 2001: Appointment of a Tenure-Track Faculty member (Applied linguist with expertise in second language acquisition, as suggested by the external reviewers on page 8 of their report)

Faculty Renewal is an important issue for the Department of French. It has to be secured, and steady, and planned in advance with the Office of the Dean and the VP/Academic's office according to the balanced tri-partite interdisciplinary orientation of our Department.

3. Calendar and Curriculum revision

a) Guidelines for undergraduate program modifications

General guidelines were included in the External Review Report of the Department under the section *current issues*. However, we agree with the

reviewers that we must pursue, in the next few years, a general revision of our undergraduate program.

b) "Ghettoization" of language courses

Since the reviewers thought the research abilities of our non-tenure track Faculty members are under-exploited, and felt some concern over the "ghettoization" of language teaching in the first two years of the programme, we believe that innovative solutions should be found in conjunction with the Dean of Arts office to address the "ghettoization" of language teaching described by the reviewers (See *External reviewers report* p. 9). The rearticulation of our lower level sequence of courses should therefore provide a better cross-fertilization of linguistics, literature, and language courses. We moreover believe a permanent mechanism should enable one lecturer, every year, to apply for professional development time in the summer semester.

c) Priorities for the next three years:

A revision of the language curriculum in accordance with the following guidelines, which are the results of ongoing discussion since the Fall of 1998:

+ reduction in the number of language courses from levels 099 up to 302; three distinctive levels created (2 courses at the beginners level; 2 courses at the intermediate level; 2 at the advanced level). Small groups will be preserved for the first two levels.

+ rearticulation of the series of language courses 099-302.

+ revision of the curriculum of conversation courses; integration of multimedia experimental methods (1XX-205-300). A team of lecturers and tenure-track Faculty members will periodically review their course descriptions in light of new developments in technology instruction and FSL techniques.

+ transformation of courses retrieved from the sequence 099-302 into service courses that will be mounted by a team of lecturers and tenure-track Faculty members.

+ Course content of 206, 230, 240 and 270 will be revised by a team of lecturers and Faculty members during this stage, as they "bridge" language, linguistics, and literature studies. Emphasis will be placed on better use and integration of new technology and of the research activities taking place at the Centre for Francophone Studies.

A revision of the linguistics and literature sequences of courses will be conducted after the revision of the language curriculum has been completed. The prospect of hiring a fourth colleague in linguistics, planned the same year according to our Faculty renewal proposal, will facilitate our efforts to strengthen some areas of our linguistics curriculum. As it is right now, the two curricula should be modified, towards a better bridging with the language courses (probably done at the 200 and 300 levels). At the 300 and 400 levels, a natural cross-discipline break should be achieved between a more practical and traditional approach to language, literature, and linguistics (applied linguistics, history of literature, FSL);

and a more theoretical one (theories of linguistics and literature, interdisciplinary studies, Francophone studies, etc).

Once modifications to the program have been implemented, an undergraduate curriculum committee will be created within the Department, in order to monitor the newly revised program, and to better integrate language practice, student participation, oral work and grammar review (Cf. *External Reviewers' report*, p. 6) to the upper-level course series.

d) Guidelines for graduate program modifications

According to the reviewers, the strongest points of the graduate program, which was implemented in 1992, are its intellectual content, breadth and depth, the personalized attention received by the students, its good completion rate, the interesting mix of local and international students, and the excellent academic record of some of its degree candidates. The Department's strength in both literature and linguistics makes it unique in Western Canada, and a viable alternative to the programs available at our sister institutions in B.C. The flexibility afforded by graduate studies at SFU appeals to and serves the needs of a non-traditional population. Faculty members are committed to serve this clientele, and should be supported in their efforts to do so.

Financial support

The reviewers made various suggestions for improving the level of financial aid to graduate students. Graduate faculty recognizes the importance of this issue and its relevance to recruiting efforts. We will therefore address this issue and seek ways to improve the level of financial support already available to students (through T.A. positions, the Graduate Fellowships program, the Private Scholarships program, Research Assistantships), and explore possible new sources of funding (for example, the Centre for Francophone Studies).

Curriculum revision

The Department of French Graduate Studies Committee will continue its ongoing discussion of the graduate curriculum in French. We will also explore collaborative efforts with SFU departments in order to revamp, for example, the joint MA in English and French Literatures, or to develop the FSL component of our Master's program, possibly with Linguistics and Education, and with the help and support of the Dean of Graduate Studies. A joint program with UBC's Department of French, Italian and Hispanic Studies could eventually be an interesting option for a Graduate program.

Enrolments and recruiting

We recognize the importance of achieving and maintaining a critical mass in graduate enrolments, and will explore additional ways to enhance our ongoing efforts to attract and retain good candidates to our graduate program. We note that the graduate cohort will vary in number from time to time as students

graduate from the program and others enter at later intervals; and in a small program any fluctuation will inevitably appear significant because of the small numbers. The Department will make recruiting a priority through continued advertising, mailings and attention to web page design. Incoming students have identified the web page as a primary source of information about the program, and the page itself receives a steady flow of hits from inside and outside Canada.

4. Linking issues

a) New Technology and alternative pedagogical approaches

The reviewers emphasized the fact that the Department was receptive to new learning technologies (for example, Fren 301 is offered on-line in Spring 2000), and we in fact believe that further integration of technology in the classroom is an important factor in the rejuvenation of courses. As the reviewers also pointed out, to start such an innovative project would need a serious commitment not only from the Faculty members of the Department of French, but also from the Dean of Arts Office and the V.P./Academic's Office.

The first step to further integration of technology into our program would be to clarify the status of the Language Learning Centre, as suggested on page 11 of the reviewers' report, and also to clarify the status of the Language Training Institute. Initial talks have been conducted in the Dean's office, but there are still many discrepancies between discussions and official calendar descriptions (1999-2000) of the Language Learning Centre and the Language Training Institute. We therefore strongly believe that the Language Learning Centre should be an interdepartmental administrative unit run by an interdepartmental steering committee.

The second way to facilitate further integration of technology into our curriculum would be for the Central Administration to provide funds for seminars, and site visits of external and technology experts.

The third pressure point in the area of new technology is tied to the equipment and technical support we need to receive from the VP/Academic's Office and the Faculty of Arts. In order to be able to integrate technology and, most of all, to adapt it to our use in a French studies research and teaching environment, we must receive prompt and adequate support not only to choose and run the best technology, but to adapt new technology to our teaching and research in the Department of French.

It is true that the Language Learning Centre can accommodate some of our needs in second language teaching, but we need more appropriate pedagogical and technical support to comply with the reviewer's statement: "(...) integration of new technology does not merely mean importing hardware, but necessitates a change of pedagogical orientation and learning schemes" (*External reviewers' report*, p. 12).

In order to accelerate the revision of our undergraduate and graduate curricula and to integrate new technology, we require a commitment from the University and the Faculty of Arts to provide the following resources:

1. In 2000-2001: renovation of the French Language Training Centre (RB7400 area), including installation of internet connections, LCD projector facilities, satellite T.V., and creation of a French Linguistics Lab. The reviewers referred to the replacement of the audio lab as not being justified. The Department does not wish to replace the lab in its actual form. Considering newer orientations to language learning and teaching, the Department is already using the Language Learning Centre but finds it justifiable to propose an instructional computer lab (integrating digital videocasting). This facility located in the RB7400 area would be available to ESL and other languages programs.
2. We also shall need a half-time Lab instructor position, and a half-time technician position to increase, and then to maintain and develop the integration of new technology into our teaching and research.

b) Centre for Francophone Studies

According to the reviewers, the *Centre d'études francophones Québec-Pacifique* has a unique status within Western Canada, and a research agenda unlikely to be duplicated elsewhere. The Department is aware of the research potential of the Centre and most Faculty members have been involved in its early development.

The Centre was created in November 1998, and is now in the second year of its initial three-year plan. We are also working on an advancement campaign to raise private funding. With the Québec government presently helping us maintain a minimal research activity, and with research funds from the small SSHRC program, the immediate future of the Centre looks bright.

It is for this reason, and because we wish to see the external reviewers' recommendations implemented, that we urge the University and the Faculty of Arts to make the Centre a high priority development site, and to help us attract further funding towards special SFU matching funds. Finally, we believe the University should authorize the physical expansion of the Centre either on the 8th-floor or 7th-floor of the Robert Brown Building.

c) Collaboration with other units

Since 1991, date of the previous external review, collaboration with other units and Departments have been initiated and supported by the Department of French:

Official collaboration with other units at SFU:

Humanities Program (teaching, steering committee)
Department of English (Conferences, joint M.A.)
Institute for the Humanities (Conference)
School of Contemporary Arts (Conference)
Faculty of Education (teaching)
Graduate Liberal Arts program (teaching, thesis supervision)
SFU Art Gallery

Unofficial collaboration with other units at SFU:

Department of Linguistics
Canadian Studies Program

Official collaboration with other Universities:

UBC (Conferences, research)
Université de Montréal (Partnership program)

Moreover, the members of the Department of French, as individuals, have regularly been involved in official collaborative teaching agreements or research projects with the following universities or research institutions:

UBC, University of Alberta, Northrop Frye Centre (UofT), Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies (UofT), University of Toronto, Queen's University, University of Ottawa, UQAM, Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke, Newberry Library (USA), CNRS (France), University of Antilles-Guyane (France).

As for the collaborative teaching effort, two summer courses were planned in conjunction with the Faculty of Education in the summers of 1997 and 1998. A joint Minor French/Education was also created, in the past, but it was finally deleted from the calendar in 1997 because the Faculty of Education could not offer three required courses on a regular basis.

We concur with the reviewers' opinion that pressure to ensure ongoing consultation, coordination of offerings and appropriate sharing of resources (perhaps through the French funding program of the B.C. Ministry of Education) has to occur at the decanal level to stimulate such an effort with the Faculty of Education. Efforts since 1996 to share the funding received by the Faculty of Education from the B.C. Ministry of Education have had some results in Spring 2000.

d) Research

Since the 1991 review, various strategies have already been identified to encourage and stimulate research in the Department of French. The Centre for Francophone Studies is already working as an incentive through its different

partnerships, workshops and seminars, and research groups of interest within the Department have been and will be fostered in the future.

The report unfortunately does not mention that two international learned conferences have been organized by the Department since the date of the previous external review (Montréal-Vancouver Conference in March 1993, and Renaissance-francophonie Conference in March 1999), and that both attracted external funding from granting agencies and were instrumental to the formation of research groups of interest. We should also mention that a one-day-conference on New Technology and French studies took place in the Department of French in Fall 1999, and that a three-day-international conference on Internet & Multimedia Applications to French Studies is being organized for Spring 2001.

We also regret that the External Review Committee does not mention the gaps in the SFU Library French collections, shortcomings which were explained to them and documented in our report. We have been involved for many years in efforts to improve and enhance the Library collections related to French studies, and we believe the quality and strength of our undergraduate and graduate programs as well as our research projects justify, at this point, a significant increase of the Department of French Library acquisition budget.

5 Future priorities

The Department of French has found a unique and original niche in Western Canada, if not in Canada, with its tri-partite programs, both for its undergraduate and graduate levels. Its research potential is expanding and its reputation, through partnership programs or individual and team research projects, is growing. Moreover, the recent addition of Italian Language courses funded 2/3 by the Italian Grant is opening new exchange and research possibilities in conjunction with the newly founded Department of Humanities. We believe it is the right time to secure the Department Faculty renewal for the next decade, and make it a priority for SFU and the Faculty of Arts. The University should also take into account the fact that the development of our unit would benefit from a one-time special funding for the rejuvenation of its French Language Training Centre (RB 7400 area) and for the development of the Centre for Francophone Studies.

The Department of French foundations are deeply rooted in a tradition and culture of excellence in teaching, both for its undergraduate and graduate programs. As uniqueness was our key for success, in the past, it should also be our trademark in the future. Our response to the external reviewers' report of the 1999 external review is therefore less a list of requests than a well thought out plan that will ensure original, and innovative development of the Department of French at Simon Fraser University.

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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May 6, 1999

Alison J. Watt
Director
Secretariat Services
Office of the Registrar
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6

Dear Ms. Watt,

It is my pleasure to submit, on behalf of the Committee members, our report as external reviewers of the Department of French at Simon Fraser University.

This report has been seen by all members of the Committee, each of whom agrees with its contents.

We hope our comments are of some use to the Department and the University. If you have any questions regarding the report, we would be happy to address them.

Thank you for making our visit to Simon Fraser so enjoyable.

Sincerely,



Douglas C. Walker

cc: G. Lang
D. Paramskas
R. Day

17.

Simon Fraser University
Department of French
Report of the External Review Committee

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Nature of Department
3. Programmes
4. Teaching Personnel
5. Linking Issues
6. Future Priorities

George Lang, University of Alberta

Dana Paramskas, University of Guelph

Douglas Walker, University of Calgary

Rodney Day, Simon Fraser University

1. Introduction

The External Review Committee for the Department of French consisted of Professors George Lang (University of Alberta), Dana Paramskas, (University of Guelph) and Douglas Walker (University of Calgary) as external members, aided by Professor Rodney Day of the Simon Fraser Department of History as the internal member. The Committee paid its site visit to the campus on February 25-27, 1999, meeting with various groups and individuals on campus during the first two days and independently on February 27 to discuss its preliminary findings and the structure of its report.

Prior to the visit, Committee members were provided with extensive documentation relevant to the evaluation, including in particular terms of reference, a number of planning documents (e.g. Preparing for the 21st Century, the Faculty of Arts 3-Year Plan), Faculty of Graduate Studies and University Fact Books, the University Calendar and, most importantly, the Department's own Internal Report. In Burnaby, this material was supplemented by further key information (e.g. departmental working documents dealing with curricular revision, current timetables and statistics, a list of graduate theses, information concerning the Language Learning Centre, student submissions).

During two days of an intensive schedule, the Committee met with senior University administrative personnel (Dr. David Gagan, Vice-President Academic; Dr. Bruce Clayman, Vice-President Research and Dean of Graduate Studies; Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts; Dr. Kathy Heinrich, Special Assistant, Academic Planning; and Ms. Alison Watt, Director, Secretariat Services), with the Department Chair, Dr. Guy Poirier, with the Chair of Graduate Studies, Dr. Phyllis Wrenn, with faculty members individually, with members of the support staff, with limited term and language instructors, with groups of graduate and undergraduate students, with Dr. Trude Heift, Director of the Language Learning Centre, and with specialist librarians responsible for the Department's collection. The Committee was able to visit all departmental facilities, as well as the Language Learning Centre and the University Library. At the close of the site visit, the Committee met again with the group of senior administrators to comment briefly on its initial reactions. (A schedule of the visit is appended to this report.)

While the documentation made available to it was detailed and comprehensive, the Committee wishes to emphasize the essential nature of on-site visits in external reviews of this type. Access to fully up-to-date information, to an inspection of the physical resources, to face-to-face meetings with individuals (where students in particular provide strikingly important observations) and to the crucial impressions which do not emerge from written texts remain the foundation upon which successful evaluations are built.

Finally, the Committee wishes to comment on the positive atmosphere surrounding its visit. The material arrangements by Alison Watt and Rebecca Tanner were impeccable; all staff associated with the Department were frank, cooperative, responsive and committed to the improvement of the Department and its programmes; Guy Poirier, a dedicated and dynamic Department Chair, was an excellent host and provider of last-minute information; and the students were insightful, constructive and enthusiastic commentators on programmes to which they show strong allegiance.

2. Nature of Department

In terms of its composition, physical resources and student body, the Department of French at Simon Fraser University is not atypical in the Canadian context. While there are obvious pressure points (budgetary and staffing needs, demands of technology, role of non-professorial stream teaching personnel, graduate recruitment, interdepartmental collaboration and so on), none of these is absent in the language departments with which we are familiar (nor, we venture to say, in sister departments at Simon Fraser). We do not believe that any of these factors present insoluble problems, and hope to suggest possible and realizable improvements below.

In terms of its programmes (both undergraduate and graduate), the Department is distinctive in terms of its tri-partite orientation: French language, literature and linguistics. Few departments in Canada, and none in the West, show this programmatic integration of these three central components of a broad preparation in French studies. The Committee is not alone in finding this an appropriate orientation: it is well appreciated by faculty, staff and students alike, and is a characteristic to be nurtured.

Finally, the collegial atmosphere in the Department is striking. It is clearly firmly rooted, despite the potential for friction that a heterogeneous set of interests and specializations might bring. Those associated with the Department of French are unanimous in recognizing this as a strength of the Department. The Committee concurs, and suggests that such an atmosphere is a good indication of potential for continued success in the implementation of the departmental mandate and in bringing about any needed improvements.

3. Programmes

a) Undergraduate:

The Department offers BA programmes in French (Honours, Major, Extended Minor) and participates in joint programmes with English, History and Politics, and Humanities. Student numbers are strong (against the background of similar departments across the country). Many students in departmental programmes intend to pursue further studies in Education, with a view to becoming French language teachers. This mixture of focused French programmes coupled with the possibility of interdisciplinary work is an appropriate implementation of the mandate of a modern language department.

The French programmes themselves include obligatory course work in three areas, French language, concentrated in the first two years, plus work in French literature and French linguistics. This mixture is unusual, if not unique, in undergraduate programmes. It serves to distinguish French at Simon Fraser from programmes at other universities, and provides a well-rounded training for students, a mixture which students themselves appreciate and strongly support. It is not without its challenges, however: it requires a mixture of professors with more than the usually divergent specializations (it would not be likely for a professor to teach in both literature and linguistic streams); it provides for staffing challenges (in the case of leaves or administrative reductions); and it makes timetable preparation difficult (offering the appropriate number of courses at the proper level in multiple streams).

The Department, needless to say, is aware of these difficulties. The Committee was able to consult an internal document initiating discussion of programme reforms.

This document supplies a good historical analysis, but requires further work if it is to provide the basis for a full implementation of the suggestions for programme modification that emerged in the course of our discussions. Importantly, the document shows initiative in the language area. It considers, to take one instance, the nature of French 099: as a service course 099 could be split into two separate offerings, one as now structured leading into the Major; a second to respond to another important clientèle interested in Humanities or in French in general but not in continuing with French studies. The second course, an analogue of which has been successfully implemented elsewhere, could include language, literature and culture, with some basic language instruction, offered in English. What is additionally important about this discussion is its demonstration that the Department is willing to innovate and to respond to certain non-traditional constituencies. What is further required is interaction with additional traditional partners: Education and Linguistics. With Education, in particular, the possibilities for collaboration are significant (consider the courses French 310, 311, 312), and some pressure is needed to ensure ongoing consultation, coordination of offerings and appropriate sharing of resources. (This pressure may need to occur at the decanal level, given the impression strongly conveyed to the Committee that Education may be resistant to more active collaboration. In our opinion, the matter needs prompt attention.)

In the literature and linguistics streams, the Department should continue in one important direction outlined in its internal planning document: the use of umbrella courses (of varying content) which may be repeated for credit. This type of "selected topics" course adds teaching load and timetable flexibility, reduces the course bank and the pressure to offer specialized courses on a regular basis, and encourages innovation.

The Committee was strongly impressed by the articulate, insightful and constructive comments of a group of undergraduate students. These students are, in general, very satisfied with the current orientation of the programme. Neither they nor the Committee see a need to change its overall structure. Among the student observations, however, there is one of particular significance. Students see language practice as concentrated in the first two years of the programme. The concentration on linguistic and literary content in years three and four, however interesting and relevant that content may be, involves a fairly traditional method of presentation (teacher-centered

instruction), and does not allow sufficiently for continuing language practice, participation, oral work or grammar review. This is an important gap in view of the interest of many students in the PDP programme in Education.

This student analysis, buttressed by the Committee's own observations, leads to a more general comment. We encourage the Department to become more aware of and actively involved in implementing alternative pedagogical approaches and methodologies (to move away, individually and collectively, from the "active lecturer / passive class model"). Multimedia should not be defined as just an "add-on", something which does not need to be integrated into course structures. The Language Learning Centre should not be seen as a peripheral and optional service. Small group work does not mean small classes; it means reorganized classes. (When properly exploited, such reorganization is resource neutral, and as a result can allay administrative fears which often concentrate on class size and the "bottom line" rather than on student enthusiasm and pedagogical results.) In all domains, not just language work, alternative pedagogical approaches and teaching methodology, multimedia, larger lectures with tutorials, small group work, team teaching and other current ideas can lead not just to economies in timetable and workload but also to professional renewal. (We note, in conclusion, that such comments are applicable to our own departments as well, and that they have generated debates similar to those which will no doubt arise at Simon Fraser. But potential controversy is no excuse for inaction.)

b. Graduate:

The MA in French is a small but well-tailored graduate programme. Students unanimously like the programme structure: its intellectual content, breadth and depth, and the personalized attention they receive. They also appreciate its flexibility--because of the small graduate cohort, programmes may be designed specifically for student needs and interests. Such programmes, particularly in departments with no PhD programme, are often both "comfortable" to the students and more complex than MA degrees that do not lead (potentially) into doctoral programmes. This situation can often produce completion rates and time-to-degree figures which are excessive. In this case, however, the Committee is of the opinion that departmental statistics are within normal limits and

fully comparable to other departments with which we are familiar, especially given the mix of part-time and full-time students at Simon Fraser.

At the same time, the students (and staff) are sensitive to critical mass issues, and to possible fragmentation because of the Department's double literature and linguistics orientation. The Committee views the current enrolment of approximately ten as a minimum to ensure appropriate numbers for graduate interaction. Any steps that can be initiated or maintained to promote interaction with other graduate students (at UBC, or in other Simon Fraser departments such as English, Linguistics or Education) would have multiple benefits.

Recruitment into the programme is hampered by the minimal availability of financial support, particularly support that can be guaranteed for a minimum of four semesters. Despite this, the programme has a good mix of local, international, full-time and part-time students, as well as recent graduates and those returning after an interruption to their studies. Students have been very successful in obtaining competitive fellowships (e.g. C.D. Nelson Memorial Graduate Scholarships) and other graduate scholarships. Nonetheless, the programme would benefit if more financial aid could be stabilized--perhaps through negotiations for service teaching with Continuing Studies, through an on-going budget line in the Department devoted to teaching assistants, or through research funding obtained by professors for their various projects.

A further challenge associated with the small size of the MA programme is the need for professors to support it virtually exclusively through overload teaching. Collaborative efforts (e.g. with Linguistics or English) might help here if the question of the language of teaching could be resolved. (We believe solutions are available--specialized reading lists, tutorials, written work done in French, for example.) It is a clear sign of the importance the Department assigns to its graduate programme, and of the devotion of its staff members, that the MA is supported through this additional teaching load. While this situation is not ideal, the Committee firmly supports the continued existence of the MA programme, whose benefits to staff morale and research productivity clearly outweigh the added pressures on workload.

4. Teaching personnel

A first and significant remark to make is that both faculty and staff are highly collegial. Although the career and professional interests at different points on the academic hierarchy inevitably diverge, the collective commitment to the well-being of the Department and its students struck all members of the Review Committee. This is an invaluable asset which the University will want to preserve and nurture.

At same time, there is a deeply ingrained perception across the full spectrum of faculty and staff that their individual and collective workloads are very heavy. This is not surprising. Academic institutions across the land have experienced "downloading" and the demand for increased productivity, which usually results in the kind of discontent just referred to. One response from administration should be to propose that this issue could be addressed at least in part by programme revision and other reforms.

The Review Committee concurred with the Department that a fourth position in the linguistics track would be intellectually justified, but our reading of the wider context also suggests that this hope is not realistic at this time. The Department itself would therefore do well to concentrate on arguments for retaining the position potentially resulting from the next retirement. In any event, maintaining three positions in the linguistics track is crucial; otherwise the distinctiveness of the Department is threatened, and further potential damage to the standing of the Department foreseeable.

Under such circumstances, it would seem logical to argue in favour of the retention of the position resulting from the forthcoming retirement in literature and its conversion into a fourth position in linguistics, which would create a fifty-fifty balance of the two tracks within the Department, albeit somewhat shrunk from its previous complement. Were such a position to arise, it should not be thought of the chance to clone past colleagues, i.e. to fill a vacancy with a duplicate of the retiree. For example, the addition of an applied linguist with expertise in second language acquisition rather than linguistics per se would help to reinforce the language component of the programme throughout all four years, would link tenure-stream faculty and lecturers/lab instructor/language instructors, and provide a holistic view of language in the

programme; it would also provide further potential links to linguistics, the Language Learning Centre, Education, etc. – matters discussed elsewhere in this report.

Research productivity in the Department is mixed, no doubt in part due to the stress suffered over recent years, to the demographics of the professorial corps, to the concentration on major long-term projects which do not lead to immediate publication, or to the distractions of administrative work. The Department is to be congratulated on the quality of its recent hirings (Cawes, Steele, Canac Marquis), and these younger colleagues (as well as the majority of their “elders”) show well in research and publication, in obtaining external research funding, and in increasing the visibility of the Department. As a matter of principle, all colleagues should be encouraged to maintain the research visibility of the Department through refereed publication in national and international journals, not only or primarily through conference presentations and/or proceedings.

Another strategy to increase the research profile would involve application for external funding, which would have the additional benefit of obtaining support for graduate students. The Centre Québec-Pacifique could lend some institutional footing to such proposals, given it has both a unique status within Western Canada, and a research agenda unlikely to be duplicated elsewhere. This approach would be bolstered were the work of the Centre integrated more visibly into courses and graduate research work.

All members of the Review Committee felt some concern over the “ghettoization” of language teaching in the first two years of the programme, concentrated in the hands of a few non-tenure stream faculty. Although these non-tenure faculty are in general respected, our impression is that the kinds of reforms regarding renewal of pedagogical approaches they might develop do not input easily into departmental policy making. Although this is in part simply due to their workload, which is heavy, the Department as whole would stand to gain from opening conduits of input from these language teachers.

This “ghettoization” of language teaching is both structural, in the sense that language practice is largely confined to the first two years of the BA, and differential in terms of personnel, in the sense that it is relegated to non-tenure track personnel. At the same time, the parts of their programmes in which many undergraduate students are most interested, i.e. language training, are largely limited to the first two years of the

programme and are taught by the lowest-paid and least protected colleagues. This problem is also related to the predominance of "active-lecturer / passive-class" pedagogical model, which is a common feature of the academic tradition and largely shared by the senior professors. This is not to say that such a model is necessarily ineffective--students feel that they receive high quality instruction at the upper levels--but it should not be the exclusive approach at those levels.

At the worst, if opportunities for career development are not accorded those who perform what is considered by the students as the most important part of their programmess, these instructors will burn-out, maybe even before those who live in the "beaux quartiers" retire with grace. In addition, there appears to be under-exploitation of scholarly resources found among lecturers (C. Caws, for example, could teach in the linguistics track).

These issues are far from unique to Simon Fraser, but it would be of great benefit to the institution were ways found for the Department to explore the possibility of greater flexibility in teaching assignments, more equitable financial and other compensation for non-tenured staff. Such reforms, which might appear daring to some, could be readily justified both in terms of increasing "productivity" and also of meeting student demand.

5. Linking Issues: Technology and Pedagogy

The Department appears receptive to new learning technologies, but exhibits a certain lack of information. In order to explore different teaching strategies, the Department needs access to good advice, some of which is available locally: in the Language Learning Centre, from those Tutors who have looked at the domain and worked with media, from the Instructional Media Centre. It should address the issues of integrating technology into all of its courses, not just language teaching, especially through use of the extensive resources available on the WWW. Within the Department itself, it should also seek to exploit resources such as TV5, and satellite access to francophone media such as Radio-Canada.

This kind of expansion of teaching competence is difficult to organize from within the Department. We suggest that the Central Administration find some way of

targeting French for helpful input, perhaps by proposing funds for seminars or site visits from external experts in consultation with the one or two younger technophiles in the Department, and with the help of the Language Learning Centre Director. Regular short workshops could be offered by the Language Learning Centre to familiarize all faculty in the French Department with available programmes and equipment, not only those faculty members responsible for language courses. Integrating technology into pedagogy is also a complex question, where the support of the Instructional Media Centre would be effective: the temptation is to simply tack on media documents onto existing course structures and approaches, a procedure which does not use technological resources effectively.

There seems to exist an attachment to familiar uses of technology: the request for a replacement of the audio lab, for example, is not justified in terms of either the materials currently on the market or the newer orientations of language learning and teaching. Closer consultation with the Language Learning Centre Director could result in better use of existing hardware facilities and adaptation of those facilities to the needs of the French Department. However, there is a perception that the Language Learning Centre is somehow part of the Department of Linguistics and that in the past, the French Department has not been properly recognized as having a stake in the facility, and that French Department needs have not been listened to. Perhaps the administrative structure of the Language Learning Centre needs to be re-thought so that the concerns of the French Department are properly addressed.

6. Future priorities

In the short term, the Department should actively pursue last autumn's discussions about curriculum and related reform. Our understanding is that the draft documents emanating from these discussions – which the Department readily made available to us once we learned of their existence – were not integrated into the self study because the process they reflected was not complete. These proposals did seem to be heading in the right direction, but the Review Committee was struck by the fact that the threads of thought in these documents came to us by word of mouth and only in the last hours of our

visit. As a first, internal priority, the Department should be urged to complete this process, perhaps as part of its response to this report.

The Department is nominally receptive to new learning technologies, but exhibits a certain lack of information and understanding of their consequences. It needs access to good advice, some of which is readily available in the Language Learning Centre, but other aspects of which will require some financial support, as well as a serious commitment on the part its internal consensus builders to make necessary changes. The Department should also address the issues of integrating technology into all of its courses, not just language teaching (e.g. use of the www, links, etc.). Its Web page is, however, a useful first step. It will be crucial for colleagues to understand that the integration of technology does not merely mean importing hardware, but necessitates a change of pedagogical orientation and learning schemes. Concretely, we reiterate our suggestion that the Central Administration encourage innovative pedagogical developments in the technology domain by providing resources to allow interested Department members, in collaboration with Trude Heift, to consult with experts in the application of new learning technologies.

The Department should consolidate, reinforce, and publicize the Centre Québec-Pacifique, which has great potential (in addition to its past accomplishments), and should expect the University administration to support this unique achievement, due in no small part to the active networking of the current Chair.

The long-term priority for the Department should be to persevere in its strategic course, while making several major tactical shifts both within the Faculty and the University, and its wider provincial and national context: strengthening its unique mix of language learning, linguistic and literary studies through application of contemporary technologies and varied models of pedagogy; integrating its diverse elements into a well-knit package of services for both undergraduate and graduate students; and slowly but steadily building its graduate programme on the foundations already laid.

Department of French – Schedule for External Review Committee
25 & 26 February, 1999

Thursday, February 25

7:20 am		Alison Watt picks up reviewers at Delta Suite Hotel - please meet at the back entrance parking area - the entrance off Richards St.
8:00-8:50	CC7402	Initial meeting with Dr. David Gagan, VP, Academic; Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts; Dr. Bruce Clayman, VP, Research & Dean of Graduate Studies; Dr. Kathy Heinrich, Special Assistant, Academic Planning & Ms. Alison Watt, Director, Secretariat Services
9:00-10:00	CC8200	Initial meeting with Dr. Guy Poirier, Chair, French
10:00-10:30	CC82000	Meeting with Staff
10:30-10:45		Break
10:45-11:20	(AQ,CC)	Tour of Dept. and visit to the Language Learning Centre
11:30-12:20	CC 7402	Meeting with Dept. (including student rep.)
12:30-1:20	Lounge (CC7406)	Open Lunch with Dept. of French
1:30-2:15	CC8200	Meeting with individual Faculty Members
2:15-2:30		Break
2:30-3:05	CC8107B	Meeting with Graduate Students
3:05-3:20	CC8200	Meeting with Mr. Christian Guilbault, Limited Term Instructor
3:30-4:20	CC7402	Meeting with Undergraduate Students
4:30-5:20	CC8200	Meeting with Dr. Phyllis Wrenn, Chair, Grad. Studies
5:20-5:35	CC8200	Committee meets on its own
5:30 – 6:30	Halpern Centre Room 114	Reception with Department members

Friday, February 26

9:00-9:30	AQ 3020	Meeting with Lang. Learning Centre Director, Dr. Trude Heift
9:30-10:15	CC8200	Meeting with Dr. Bruce Clayman
10:15-10:30		Break
10:30-12:30	CC8200	Meeting with individual Faculty members
12:40-1:20	Lounge (cc7406)	Lunch with Ralph Stanton, Aleksandra Zielinski, Dr. Jacqueline Viswanathan, Library Rep. for French and Dr. Guy Poirier

1:20-2:00	Library	Tour of the Library
2:00-2:50	CC8200	Committee meets on its own
3:00-3:50	CC8200 (or cc8107B)	Meeting with the Dr. Guy Poirier, Chair, French
4:00-4:45	PCR	Closing meeting with Dr. David Gagan, VP, Academic; Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts; Dr. Bruce Clayman, VP, Research & Dean of Graduate Studies; Dr. Kathy Heinrich, Special Assistant, Academic Planning & Ms. Alison Watt, Director, Secretariat Services

Saturday, February 27

9:00-5:00	Room 101, HC	Available to Reviewers for discussion
9:00-5:00	Room 1300, HC	Computing Lab - available to Reviewers for working on report

PCR - President's Conference Room, Strand Hall
 HC - SFU at Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC, V6B 5K3, Tel: 291-5000