

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC
MEMORANDUM

To: Senate
From: J.M. Munro
Vice-President, Academic
Re: Review of the Department
of French
Date: September 19, 1991

Attached is a summary of the report of the Department of French External Review Committee for the information of Senate. The review was discussed at the Senate Committee on Academic Planning, and the committee voted to receive the report.

The report of the Review Committee and the response of the Department is available in Secretarial Services, Registrar's Office, for any Senator who wishes to read the completed documents.



Attachment

/pjs

Summary of the findings of the External Review of the Department of French

In March 1991, the Department of French was examined by the External Review Committee. The committee had the following members:

Professor Pierre Léon, of the Graduate Department of French at the University of Toronto,
Professor Marthe Pagé from the Département de Littératures, Université Laval, and
Professor Raymond LeBlanc, Institut des langues secondes, Université d'Ottawa.
Professor Kathy Mezei of the Department of English at SFU was the internal member of the Review Committee.

The Department prepared a comprehensive self-study, examining the strengths and weaknesses of the undergraduate program and its three components: linguistics, literature and language, and the graduate program, and offering suggestions for change for the problems identified in the self-study. The External Review Committee's report depended heavily on the Department's self-study.

The major recommendations of the External Review Committee (which echo the needs identified by the Department) can be summarized as follows:

- The Department requires 2 additional faculty positions to provide better course scheduling; development of better program linkage with the Faculty of Education and the Linguistics Department; encourage more research activities; encourage more linkage with the outside community.
- The Departmental Assistant position should be upgraded to a full-time position in the Department of French, and should not be shared with another department.
- The undergraduate program would benefit by a revitalization of the language laboratories, and improved co-ordination between classwork and lab work. Material back-up (tapes, films, newspapers, video material) needs to be improved. Course improvements were suggested, such as expansion of the areas covered in the literature program.

- The graduate program should be repatriated to the Department, rather than remaining as a combined graduate program with the other two former DLLL departments.

As a result of the needs identified in the review process, the Department of French has been working on curriculum changes, and a faculty position has been authorized for 1992/93.

The report of the Review Committee, and the response by the Department is available in Secretariat Services, Registrar's Office for any Senator who wishes to read the complete documents.

REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
Simon Fraser university

MEMBERS

Members of the review committee were:

Prof. Pierre Léon (Chair of Committee)
Graduate Department of French
University of Toronto

Prof Marthe Pagé
Département de Littératures
Université Laval

Prof Raymond LeBlanc
Institut des langues secondes
Université d'Ottawa

Dr. Kathy Mezei
Department of English, SFU

MEETINGS

From Tuesday, March 5, 1991, to Friday, March 8, 1991, meetings had been scheduled with Dean of Arts, Bob Brown; Vice President, Jock Monro; Jaap Tuinman, Dean of Education; Bruce Clayman, Dean of Graduate Studies; Barrie Bartlett, Department Chair, as well as with all faculty members and teaching staff, graduate students, representatives of undergraduate students, departmental assistant, support and technical staff.

INTERNAL REPORT

The external review committee had been provided in advance with a carefully detailed INTERNAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH at SMF. In the following pages, this document will be referred to as the INT.REP.

The INT.REP. appeared to be extremely accurate and complete in its description of the aims, philosophy, and history of the department, giving for each programme a detailed description of all courses with their strengths and weaknesses.

In a few cases only, the views of the committee will differ from those expressed in the INT.REP.

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Strengths and weaknesses have been carefully pointed out in the INT.REP.(pp.5-8).

The committee has been quite impressed by the *high quality of the French spoken by all students*, despite the fact that they live in an anglophone environment.

A large number of the members of the teaching staff are native French speakers. The others have a *perfect command of the language as well*.

All students have highly praised their teachers for being *competent, accessible and dedicated*. The chairman has also been praised by staff and students for the same reasons.

Weaknesses have been found in conversation courses. Students are complaining that classes may have up to 25 students. A remedy to this acute problem cannot be found in training sessions in the language laboratory, due to the lack of personnel and adequate programming.

Our recommendations would be:

- 1) reinstatement of laboratory *instructors*,
- 2) better *coordination* of class work and language laboratory,
- 3) adequate language laboratory *material* for individual training at all levels of instruction for all programs,
- 4) a detailed *catalogue* of all available tapes for remedial or any other type of work,
- 5) adequate *video equipment* allowing students to look at and study various types of French films and other authentic materials. This type of study is very important to compensate for the absence of contextualized practice.

A gap has been perceived between 202, 206 and 301 courses. There is certainly *not enough reading required in 202*. There is a need for a course in *remedial pronunciation*. This

course, intended to be given in the new program (see FR.312, p.40, INT.REP.) will be a welcome addition to the program.

Attribution of courses does not seem to be always adequate when comparing 205 and 300 conversation courses allocated to faculty members, and a 302 advanced course in written composition, for example, attributed to a sessional lecturer at the last moment. The second type of course requires much more experience, knowledge and assignments than the first one.

A translation course would be a good addition to the existing program, for a better understanding of the linguistic mechanisms of French and English as well. Eventually, a more advanced course in translation theory could be added at a higher level.

Research is needed in the area of teaching and evaluation of language practice at beginning and intermediate levels, in order to solve such problems as integration and/or harmonization of immersion students in the classic curriculum. This kind of research on language acquisition — comprehension and oral skills — could be done by lecturers, who could eventually become tenure track with the acquisition of a PHD in the field.

Understaffing can probably account for all of the problems mentioned above, as well as others listed in the following sections below.

LITERATURE PROGRAM

Strengths and weaknesses of this program are well exposed in the INT.REP. (pp.10-12).

The most original feature of the program is probably the emphasis given to linguistics in a context where it is sometimes neglected. Courses in Quebecois literature are also a good asset. But they should certainly be expanded as should courses in other modern fields, as suggested (p. 12):

At the 400 level, the areas of *cinema, feminist literature, francophone literature* outside Quebec and France would certainly represent domains of significant relevance to the literature program. But they need to be incorporated through the establishment of *new courses*.

LINGUISTICS PROGRAM

The linguistics program goal is primarily intended as "a means to achieve insights into the structure and functioning of the French Language" INT.REP (p.13). From this point of view, the existing courses seem to be *adequate and coherent* in both theoretical and applied linguistics.

Weaknesses arise from the lack of an elementary linguistics *introductory course* at the 200 level.

In third year, the shortness of the SFU semester does not allow for the teaching of as much content as is needed in FR 306. This 306 course should be divided into two. For instance phonetics, phonology and morphology could constitute the first part, and syntax, semantics and sociolinguistics the second.

4th year students, with a good academic record (B⁺ average) should be allowed to attend graduate courses.

At the 300 or 400 level, there should also be courses in *French* and *Quebecois culture*, as new courses are integrated into existing courses.

GRADUATE PROGRAM

All graduate students are well trained and express themselves in remarkably good and fluent French. The focus on linguistics and literature is interesting, and the recommended bibliography excellent.

Faculty members have been very flexible in accomodating student interests. Despite the small number of staff, an impressive increase in graduate student enrolment has occurred (see INT.REP. p.30). *Weaknesses* in the graduate program is again the result of *understaffing*.

Each course taught is in addition to a regular undergraduate teaching load. Since there is no catalogue for graduate studies, there is a lack of visibility for both the program and its requirements. Besides, there are no requirements that would give a uniform basis to a strong graduate program.

The committee's recommendation is that more should be invested in this program by hiring at least two more faculty members able to teach at this level and by publishing a structured program.

PHD PROGRAM

Excellent elements are in place to sustain a graduate PHD program and direct PHD work. In order to reach this goal the French Department should:

- 1) continue to work in *conjunction* with other departments, especially for linguistics
- 2) take advantage of the *specialisations* of new faculty members to be appointed
- 3) start a joint program in cooperation with the *Faculty of Education*

Repatriation of graduate studies in an autonomous French Department would seem advantageous from an *administrative* point of view (see INT.REP., p. 43). It would also have the advantage of distributing teaching assistantships and scholarships in a more equitable manner between French, Linguistics and Spanish. Each of them should certainly be given the right of using as they see fit an equal amount of funds.

SIZE AND BACKGROUND

As already stated above, the existing *staff is too small*. A comparison, for the academic year 1989-90, (p.38 of the INT.REP) would show inequalities in the Department of French, such as:

Number of faculty members: SFU: 7 Victoria: 15
Total number of students: SFU: 1 037 Victoria: 636

As a result, students are complaining that there are, for courses such as French syntax, 60 students or more who are on a waiting list to enter the course. Most of them will have to wait for *two years* before having a chance to take the course.

BACKGROUND

The whole staff is highly competent and praised for its efficiency. But, due again to the small number of instructors, there is *not enough diversity*. This situation is probably reinforced by the strong philosophical consensus on the narrow point of the close link between linguistics and literature as well as by the long-term working relationships between the staff members. Everybody must know how to do everybody else's

work in such a small unit. There is certainly a *need for new blood*. The proposal made (p.44-45, INT.REP) would require, when applied, hiring *specialists* in areas where there are presently gaps in the literature and linguistics French program.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS OF FACULTY MEMBERS

Research: Research has not been done as extensively as could have been expected, because of the obvious fact that faculty members have too much to deal with (administration work, meetings, committee, teaching...). See list of publications pp. 37-59.

It must be added that the professors of the French Department are working in isolation. It is not easy for them - as it is for those in large departments - to participate in research teams and publication networks. All this kind of infrastructure which would stimulate research is lacking.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH SUPPORT: Due to the small number of the staff and the obligatory diversity of research fields, only individual grants have been awarded. Also the fact that research is mainly concentrated on theoretical work has probably resulted in grant applications for smaller amounts than would otherwise be the case.

Recommendation. Given that a new chairman position is in the offing, it should be remembered that if larger research projects are to be carried out, someone with strong leadership qualities, as well as expertise in some domain will be needed. A *dynamic* and competent leader would probably be better than a highly specialized person without team spirit.

ADEQUACY OF THE SUPPORT STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The current part-time post shared with the Linguistics Department is inadequate given the rapidly increasing size of the French department.

A departmental assistant position, full time, is needed for each department, particularly in a trimester system where registration and the other processes are repeated three times a year (INT.REP. p.45).

SECRETARIAL STAFF

The workload could be *better shared between the chairman's secretary and the receptionist.*

RECEPTIONIST

This position should be *upgraded* so that more responsibilities could be taken on.

ADEQUACY OF LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The *inadequacy* of the SFU library in French is emphasized by teachers and students. Books are primarily missing in the area of *French Literature*. The UBC library is too far away, and interlibrary loans often take too long to be practical.

TAPE LIBRARY

As noted before this library requires a *serious updating* (see also INT.REP. p.47) and needs to be computerized, for a modern circulation-control and listing of tapes.

More attendants are also required to handle and control tapes, especially in peak hours.

COMPUTING LIBRARY

The proposed computer laboratories project (INT.REP. p.47) seems very interesting. But it will probably not replace all the possibilities of a language laboratory.

LABORATORIES

A computing library should not make the language laboratories obsolete. These laboratories would be better used if, as noted before, a better coordination were established between classwork and lab practice.

A *catalogue*, with specific detailed instructions should be provided to students willing to work individually on diverse aspects of French.

The existing equipment, which is more than 10 years old needs replacement. A gradual replacement program should be implemented.

QUALITY OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

The department is still quite young and has only a small number of graduate students. Up to now insufficient work has been produced to allow for a fair evaluation.

SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Inadequate support is provided for graduate students in the Department of French. Scholarships are very rare or non-existent.

Unequal division of funds between Linguistics, Spanish and French has been underlined above. Each department should be given the right to an equal share of scholarships.

PROGRESS OF STUDENTS THROUGH THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

The graduate students' command of the French language is very good. Their knowledge in the various disciplines seem also to be reasonably good, as far as can be judged by the committee, in such a very short period of time. Given the poor level of resources of the present department, one can probably not expect as broad a spectrum of knowledge as in a large department.

EFFECTIVENESS

Administration of the department is carried out remarkably well.

Student/faculty relations are extremely good.

Relations with other institutions could be improved. For instance no one has attempted to organize any meetings, research groups or colloquia between SFU and UBC.

Relations with the outside community could also be improved. Neither staff nor students seem to be actively involved in French community clubs such as l'Alliance Française, France-Canada, etc...

The Committee's recommendation would be that a *French Department Newsletter* be published regularly to create a link

between faculty members and graduate students with announcements of internal and external events, meeting summaries, research projects, work in progress, call for papers, colloquia, publication of staff and student positions offered elsewhere, festivities in French, lectures and films at the Maillardville Alliance Française, etc.

BOOKSTORE

Students and teachers feel the need for the University Bookstore to offer newspapers, magazines, and books in French, especially given the already mentioned weaknesses in the library holdings.

CONCLUSION

With a very small staff, the French Department has mounted a solid program in a few short years. The number of undergraduate and graduate students has been constantly growing. But the department has now reached a point where it requires:

- 1) additional Faculty
- 2) a full time Departmental Assistant
- 3) new courses
- 4) more care in course attribution
- 5) more investment in research, and better adjusted workloads, to allow for a strong graduate program and for joint programs with the Linguistics Department and the Faculty of Education
- 6) minor adjustment in various domains, as stated in the report

Read and approved by the External Committee, Toronto:


Pierre Léon


Marthe Pagé


Raymond Leblanc

Date: 8.4.91

Date: 91.04.15

Date: 20/10/91

DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH

RESPONSE TO REPORT

OF

EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMMITTEE

SUMMER SEMESTER

1991

DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH

Response to External Review Report

The report of the External Review committee may best be characterized as reflecting the views expressed in the Department's own Internal Report. Thus, the strengths of which the Department boasts and the weaknesses which it readily acknowledges in its Internal Report are also those recognized and addressed by the reviewers; further testimony as to the reality of these strengths and weaknesses was apparently furnished by student input via individual and group interviews with the Review Committee.

THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

The Department is pleased that the Review Committee has therefore generally expressed its agreement with what the Department values as representing the strengths and originality of its tripartite undergraduate program in language, literature and linguistics. Three individual examiners, each with expertise in one of these areas, characterize the undergraduate program as of positive value:

a) in terms of the *"high quality of the French spoken by all students"*

b) in that "the most original feature of the [literature] program is probably the emphasis given to linguistics in a context where it is sometimes neglected"

c) in that "the existing [linguistics] courses seem to be *adequate and coherent* in both theoretical and applied linguistics."

Similarly, the weaknesses to which the examiners allude are recognized and already discussed in some detail in the Department's Internal Report. The Department takes comfort in the fact that such weaknesses are not seen as manifold; no hitherto unidentified

weaknesses are laid bare by the Review Committee and the Department is faced with no need for breast-beating or self-exculpation. In short, the Department in its Internal Report and the External examiners in their report are clearly in accord on what constitute the weaknesses in the undergraduate program; they differ to some degree in what are seen as the resolutions to these problems.

Pages 2 - 4 of the Review Report include a number of recommendations relating (in various degrees) to the content/organization, the backup support, and the staffing of the language, literature and linguistics components of the undergraduate program. The points are here re-ordered as follows and each accompanied by the Department's response:

Language program:

Recommendation :

1) a revitalization of the language laboratories and improvement of the co-ordination between classwork and lab. work. Language laboratories should not be entirely replaced by computer labs.

Response:

The Department readily acknowledges that a better use can be made of the lab. facilities even at a time when the current leaning in terms of technological aids is towards the *interactive* capabilities of the computer lab. In short, we see the need to maintain part of our language laboratory facilities and to improve their use while at the same time developing a computer-lab. facility.

The co-ordination suggested is a matter of internal course-planning easily addressed.

Recommendation:

2) an improvement in material backup: tapes, films, authentic materials, video material etc.

Response:

Department agrees wholeheartedly; it is partly in terms of the acquiring, use and ready availability of such materials that the Department persists in its long-standing plea for sole and total use

and control of the French Language Training Centre's Lounge facilities.

Recommendation:

3) the expansion of some course curricula to include more reading material; the addition of a course in remedial pronunciation; the addition of courses in translation (practice and theory).

Response:

We agree that a certain increase of reading material even in the lower-level language courses aimed at oral competence and communication may well be desirable. This is a curriculum change that will be implemented gradually.

As suggested in its Internal Report, the Department recognizes the need for a course in remedial phonetics and plans to develop a combination of courses in this area. It has already moved in this direction with the establishment of the new French 312 course.

The suggestion for the addition of translation courses has two aspects to it. First, the reviewers suggest that a practical translation course be added as part of the program designed to produce language competence as well as with a view to "better understanding the linguistic mechanisms of French and English." We are not convinced of the validity of such procedures to help improve either oral or written competence in French; nor are we convinced that such a course would provide knowledge more handled in a course of contrastive linguistic and stylistics. Second, the suggestion of "a more advanced course in translation" implies a program in translation - a highly specialized area of endeavour which, to be effective, would have to go far beyond the addition of several courses.

Recommendation:

4) on the staffing of the language component (ranging from 100 through 300 level courses), the report makes a number of comments and/or suggestions:

i) that the practice of frequently mounting critical upper level composition and oral courses by an ever-changing sequence of (sometimes last-minute) Sessional Instructor appointees is to be deplored:

ii) laboratory monitors should be re-instated:

iii) formal evaluation of the language *program* should be carried on as should *research* within the language program

iv) such research could be carried out by promotion of Lecturers to tenure-track rank on acquisition of a Ph.D.

v) tape library requires updating and computerized control; needs more attendants

Response:

The solutions proposed (i,ii,iii,iv,) - and certainly supported by the Department - are based on the reviewers' perception of the Department's need for more permanent faculty posts. More importantly, the Department sees the reinstatement of the Laboratory monitor positions as critical to the *revitalisation* of the language laboratory programs. Although research within the language program is of undeniable importance to the health and development of a language program, no provision is currently made in the staffing arrangements of the Department for research to be carried on. The Lecturers are responsible for the elaboration and mounting of the lower-level language courses and are expressly freed from research responsibilities in order to devote themselves to teaching and to a greater and more frequent classroom presence than CFL personnel. There are various ways of changing this situation: the reviewers suggest the possibility of promotion from non-CFL to CFL position for Lecturers completing a doctorate. The Department does not subscribe to the idea of promotion from non-tenured rank to tenured rank as a procedure attendant on the completion of a doctorate; however, it certainly urges the opening related to the language program. The tape-library facilities are currently being reorganized and the loan-service computerized.

Literature Program

Unlike the language program, the literature (and the linguistics) program poses no particular pedagogic problems which the committee wished to address. The reports on Literature and Linguistics are consequently briefer.

Recommendation:

1) that the areas of cinema, feminist literature, francophone literature outside Quebec and France, French and Quebecois culture deserve to be added to the program.

Response:

The Department sees this recommendation as of value largely in terms of its general implication, viz. the need for more faculty.

Linguistics Program**Recommendation;**

1) that Fren 306 be divided into two courses.

Response: The recommendation arises from a Departmental suggestion to develop two courses to replace 306 and that phonetics, phonology and morphophonology constitute the first (200 level) course and morpho-syntax, semantics and sociolinguistics constitute the second (300 level) course. New Course Proposals are in process for the establishment of these two new courses.

THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

The reviewers' statements about the graduate program are both confused and confusing and this despite their extensive discussions with both faculty and graduate students and the information provided by the Internal Report and the University Calendar. The confusions arise in part from the strange situation created by the split of the old DLLL into three autonomous departments none of which has a graduate program. The reviewers had great difficulty in understanding both the administrative and the academic organization of a number of what were once presented as complementary areas of endeavour but which in fact already functioned as virtually independent and coexistent programs within the larger administrative unit of the DLLL.

The following opinions/recommendations may be culled from the report:

Opinion: "there is a lack of visibility for both the program and its requirements. Besides, there are no requirements that would give a uniform basis to a strong graduate program."

Response: The Department agrees with the first sentence and believes that the visibility of the program and the statement of clearcut entry requirements will most easily be achieved when the French graduate program is "repatriated" to the Department of French.

The Department disagrees with the second sentence, while admitting that the calendar has no clear *statement* of requirements relating to French graduate studies .

Note: One unfortunate and indeed egregious error in the report appears to be the result of a cross-language confusion on the part of the reviewers all of whom speak French as their first language. Mention of an "impressive increase in graduate student enrolment" with reference to a table on p.30 on our Internal Report indicates that the title "French Graduates (majors/minors)" was interpreted as referring to the number of students in the graduate program rather than as students graduating per year from the undergraduate program. This was certainly a *post-visit* error; while on campus the reviewers met the graduate students and appeared to be well aware of the number of students currently registered.

Opinion: "the focus on linguistics and literature is interesting, and the recommended bibliography excellent"

Reaction: An enigmatic statement actually referring to course outlines of all French graduate courses taught over the last 15 years furnished to the reviewers at their request. This is therefore their attempt to evaluate quality of the program from the bibliographies established for these courses.

Opinion: "Excellent elements are in place to sustain a graduate PHD program and direct PHD work."

Reaction: The elements referred to are assumed to be faculty and the graduate program as represented by the established courses. The Department agrees but is also ready to accept the recommendation

i.e. "to continue to work in *conjunction* with other departments, especially linguistics". As far as students are concerned there is always the possibility of taking graduate courses in other departments of complementary disciplines including linguistics; co-operation between the French and Linguistics Departments in terms of membership in supervisory committees presents no problems.

Recommendation : "start a joint program in cooperation with the Faculty of Education"

Response: As demonstrated on a number of occasions, the Department is always willing to discuss "joint programs " for teachers of French with the Faculty of Education . It is felt however that some decision must first be made on the fate of the M.A. - Teaching of French Program left in limbo both by the moratorium placed on it in 1985 and (since this degree was essentially a DLLL-mounted program dependent on faculty from what are now different departments) by the subsequent dismemberment of the DLLL.

Recommendation: "hiring at least two more faculty members able to teach at this [graduate] level. . ."

Response: See below under REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: "Repatriation of graduate studies in an autonomous French Department would seem advantageous from an administrative point of view"

Response: This is the view stated in the Department's internal report. However, as is also stated in that report, the question of autonomy of the program goes far beyond mere administrative convenience and sharing of scholarship funds, and strikes at the heart of the academic integrity and reputation of a department. If the list of French graduate courses that exists in the current calendar and the list of French graduate faculty as published in the current calendar have been capable without input from any other faculty or program of sustaining a viable graduate program over the last 10 -15 years under the rubric of the DLLL, then there can be no reason for it not to do so under its own name and responsibility.

The Department is currently preparing a submission to FAGS to have the French Graduate program excised from the Language and Linguistics Graduate Program and to have it housed

where it logically belongs. It is understood that the Department of Linguistics is to make the same request with regards to the Linguistics graduate program.

Opinion: Graduate students "express themselves in remarkably good and fluent French" "The graduate students' command of the French language is very good."

Reaction:

A gratifying comment on the students' linguistic ability in the use of French; it reflects perhaps the tendency of native speakers of French to place a degree of emphasis not only on what non-native students of French say but also on how they say it.

Opinion: "All graduate students are well trained." "Their knowledge in the various disciplines seem[s] to be reasonably good, as far as can be judged by the committee, in such a very short period of time. Given the poor level of resources of the present department, one can probably not expect as broad a spectrum of knowledge as in a large department."

Reaction:

The somewhat inappropriate terminology of "well trained" is assumed to refer to the opinion subsequently expressed that the graduate students to whom they spoke gave every evidence of being "reasonably good" in their various areas of study. The reference to a "broad spectrum of knowledge " appears to refer to unspecified deficiencies in the program as mounted by a too small number of faculty rather than to deficiencies in the students they met.

These opinions, however, are neither very clearly expressed nor soundly argued or supported; they are difficult to respond to. It is disappointing that no attempt was made to express an opinion on the not inconsiderable body of theses directed by members of the Department (listed as part of the documentation and available to the reviewers).

FACULTY

Research and Teaching contributions of Faculty members.

Opinion: "Research has not been done as extensively as could have been expected . . ."

Response: This statement is, to say the least, contentious. If the research and publications of the department are considered as a whole then there is little question that they compare favourably with other departments of French. Individual output varies, and this generally proportionately to the administrative and teaching loads involved. It is indeed unfortunate that the reviewers have failed to express the shock and disbelief that they expressed orally about the **course-load assignments** of faculty members over the years. They expressed considerable concern over the diversity of courses offered by faculty over the course of the years as well as annual course-loads frequently involving five different courses. They therefore attribute what they appear to see as a lack to "the obvious fact that faculty members have too much to deal with . . ." - a statement that appears to understate their opinion.

The point about "working in isolation" is valid to a certain degree. Thus, it is true that a small number of people involved in maintaining a diverse and reasonably elaborate program in French literature and French linguistics share few specialized research interests within the Department. However, the reviewers failed to note or to understand the contacts which all faculty members have and maintain with other academics in their particular fields. This fact can be ascertained by looking at the publication records which clearly show that faculty members have good and wide contacts not only in Canada but more particularly throughout much of Europe. It remains true, however, that, given the diversity of research interests, there simply is no basis for research teams nor, as the reviewers indicate, for large grant applications.

Given the current direction in external funding towards the team application for large grants, the Department must address itself to the problem of a **departmental research program** involving a number of faculty in disparate fields.

This problem - as suggested by the reviewers - should be tied to the selection of a new Chair to the Department. As of September 1, 1991 there will be a one-year interim Chair. Discussions with the Dean of Arts and the Vice-president (Academic) re a more permanent selection will take place during the coming academic year.

SUPPORT STAFF

Recommendation: the creation of a fulltime Departmental Assistant post .

Response:

The reviewers come from universities that work under entirely different administrative and calendar conditions. They had some difficulty in appreciating what a trimester system means in terms of constant administrative pressures and the sustained demand on the academic counselling resources of a department. Their recommendation is supported wholeheartedly not only by the Department of French but by the Department of Linguistics with whom the Current Departmental Assistant is shared.

REQUIREMENTS

A final list of "requirements" brings the report to a close; this statement of requirements is not exhaustive in that it does not summarize the recommendations scattered throughout the report.

- "1) additional Faculty
- 2) a full time Departmental Assistant
- 3) new courses
- 4) more care in course attribution
- 5) more investment in research, and better adjusted workloads, to allow for a strong graduate program and for joint programs with the Linguistics Department and the Faculty of Education."

Response:

Recommendations 1) to 4)and part of 5) could probably be applied to any department in the University. However, despite the "motherhood" status of such recommendations, the Department wishes to draw attention to one fundamental point. Although the external reviewers have depended to a large extent upon the Department's own Internal Review as a source of their information, opinions and argumentation, in one facet at least they have gone beyond the spirit and the content of that report. Virtually every part of their report, be it on the language, literature, linguistics, undergraduate or graduate programs, draws attention to the problem of understaffing as something of which they became acutely and quickly aware. In short, their emphasis on the problems caused by the level of staffing in the Department goes beyond any comments made either in our report or in our discussions with them. **It is therefore our contention that the problem of staffing (both academic and administratvie) is to be seen as one that goes beyond a mere perennial departmental clamour for more posts and should be treated as one of critical concern.**

EVALUATION OF THE REVIEW REPORT

The Department is disappointed with the quality of the report. While the reviewers are for the most part positive in their judgements of the various aspects of departmental programs, staffing and administration, we feel that their written report is confused and confusing. It depends too fundamentally on the Department's own Internal Review and the arguments there presented. While it is satisfying to be taken at one's own evaluation, the Department would have appreciated fresh insights, opinions and suggestions based on the broader experience of the reviewers.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Office of the Vice-President, Academic
Memorandum

To: SCAP Members

From: Alison Watt, Secretary of SCAP

Subject: Meeting: 18 September, 1991. Item on French Department Review
SCAP 91-28a

Date: 16 September 1991

The External Review of the French Department makes frequent reference to the Internal Report prepared by the Department at the outset of the review. Attached are relevant sections of the Internal report which are referred to in the External report.

Enclosure



III. CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

1. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Emphasis on the ability to communicate in French prior to undertaking more advanced studies in literature and linguistics is certainly no longer a feature that makes this Department distinct from other French departments. However, the existence of a coherent program in French linguistics as a complement to the French literature program constitutes a distinctive - even if not uniquely distinctive - characteristic of the Department in comparison with other departments of French in Canada, especially when the comparison is made with departments of approximately the same size. In practice, both the literature and the linguistics programs adopt the basic view that each represents a way of looking at and studying language and language use. Every effort is made to break down the traditional barriers that have so long alienated literature and linguistics and to share and develop analytical tools and approaches. We strongly believe that our attempt to elaborate a program where literature and linguistics are seen as interdependent and enriching approaches to the study of language phenomena represents a distinctive and valuable feature of the Department.

2. PROGRAM CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

1) Language Program

a) General description and goals

The French language program started with the university in Fall 1965. It has greatly expanded since that time but has remained faithful to its basic philosophy: that oral competence is fundamental and must precede reading and writing; that language competences must precede the study of literature and linguistics.

Many changes have occurred in the quarter of a century which has passed. The program as first implemented was based upon the audio-lingual method, subsequently changed to audio-visual methods, and has changed again to a variety of eclectic methods with an increasing

emphasis on a communicative approach. Although they have changed in title, status and responsibilities, native French speakers or persons with native speaker ability have always predominated as (generally temporary) classroom teachers. Thus, the "native informants" of the audio-lingual era evolved into "language instructors". Lecturer positions were created in 1975 specifically to take responsibility for the elaboration, organization and mounting of the lower-level language courses.

Concurrently, other schools, colleges and universities were also abandoning the traditional grammar/translation/literature courses for approaches with a greater emphasis on oral competence, so that SFU is no longer unique in this respect.

b) Current language program

Simon Fraser University has no universal French language requirement for admission (Beginner's Language Grade 11 - which may or may not be French - is the only admission requirement) and no general second language requirement to graduate. Consequently, the Department is not faced in its elementary courses with huge numbers of students interested solely in fulfilling a university regulation. In short, students registering even in the elementary courses generally do so out of interest or for some specific personal goal.

Lately, the influx of students from the French Immersion programs is presenting us with new challenges.

The current language program has three steps:

- 100/101, 110/111, for beginners. The courses are below the normal competence of entrants from B.C. High Schools French programs and are regarded as service courses. They are not part of the "challenge" system.
- 151, 201, 202 and 206 are intermediate courses each lasting one 13-week semester. Most future French Majors and Minors enter the system at some point in this series while other students usually finish here. Emphasis is initially on oral skills followed by a shift to written skills.

This progression through the first two years has an accompanying series of parallel courses answering specific needs or offering the opportunity to enhance competence. These are 110 and 111 (reading competence), 205 (intermediate conversation - to provide oral maintenance while students take 202/206 with their greater emphasis on writing), 216 for entering immersion program students, and 199 for native or erstwhile native speakers needing to upgrade their writing abilities before entering the program.

- 300, 301 and 302 (covering advanced conversation and advanced writing) serve mostly those students who want to major or minor in French. They represent the culmination of the language program.

The general basis for initial registration in the 100 and 200 series of courses is a placement test. This consists of a combined Standardized Oral Test, a short written test aimed at evaluating knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and, in many cases, an interview.

Advanced placement in the series permits the student to apply for challenge credit for any courses "jumped" (up to a total of 13 credits). Challenge credit is awarded after successful completion of the advanced course in which the student is registered.

Transfer credit for courses taken elsewhere (particularly in B.C. colleges) is a regular feature of admission. Moreover, students progressing through the 100 - 200 series of courses are encouraged to go to Quebec (most particularly under the aegis of the Summer Bursary Program) and to France to take courses for which they may also be awarded transfer credit.

The language courses are backed up by extensive tape library and language laboratory facilities. The laboratories are now used primarily on a library basis (i.e. students follow - in their own time - a tape program accompanying the course they are taking) and as a means of regular testing.

c) Strengths of the language program

The strengths of the language program lie essentially in the careful gradation of objectives in the 151, 201, 202 and 206 series of courses and in the transition of emphasis from oral to written. These courses are backed up by the beginners courses (100 and 101), the special course for Immersion students (216), the maintenance oral course (205) and the remedially-oriented course for francophones, etc. (199). These courses, which parallel and bolster the basic series, give a degree of flexibility to the program in terms of the individual needs of students.

The advance placement and the challenge and transfer policies all help to encourage students to travel to francophone universities. The placement test functions with a reasonable degree of accuracy and helps to maintain a level of homogeneity in the classes. The timetabling (multi-sections and concurrent scheduling of different courses) permits relatively easy transfer from course to course during the initial days of each semester.

The use of Language Instructors under the direction of a course chairman allows for relatively small classes - for the most part somewhat below the national average. The number of Language Instructors employed also permits students to encounter a variety of accents.

Lab. facilities permit students to undertake listening and pattern practice in their own time and also permit rapid and relatively frequent testing of some of the oral aspects of the courses. Oral testing forms an important part of these basic courses and is based upon individual interview.

French 300 (Advanced Conversation) - unlike Fren 205 which is a maintenance course - is designed to engage conversation skills over a wide range of topics and situations and aims to develop the skills that characterize authentic speech.

French 301 and 302 (Advanced Composition I and II) are taught by tenure-track faculty and - frequently - by Sessional Instructors or replacements. They are sequenced courses with the common purpose of consolidating writing skills, not simply in terms of normative grammar, but also in terms of argumentational abilities and contextual appropriateness. The courses therefore aim to produce writing skills that are authentic and appropriate to a variety of real life uses rather than simply academic/pedagogic in emphasis.

d) Weaknesses of the language program

The 13-week semester system places some constraints on course content. University regulation requiring that upper levels courses be "reachable" after no more than four semesters of prerequisite courses prevents establishing a more elaborate program with a greater number of courses covering the same material in smaller "doses". (The local colleges offer far more courses covering the same material; on admission to SFU a maximum 13 units of college credit may be transferred, i.e. equivalent to our 151, 201, 202 and 206 series.) One of the results of this situation is that there tends to be an observable gap between the 202/206 and the 301 language courses which some students have difficulty in bridging.

The weaknesses in the 301 and 302 courses result - not so much from their aims or content - but from their position between the formal skills taught in the 100 and 200 level language courses and the variety of functional writing skills required of students in their 400-level literature and linguistics courses. Certainly class size is also a factor that gives cause for concern. (classes can vary from 16 to 40).

The number of Language Instructors needed to teach in any of the 100 and 200 level courses may be seen as a source of a certain rigidity in terms of weekly planning which, to some degree, is inimical to methods becoming more oriented towards the concept of communicative competence.

While the problems of pronunciation are adequately treated as part of the courses as offered, there is a need for a course dealing with phonetics and remedial pronunciation.

It is recognized that the program should permit a degree of controlled experimentation in terms of methods and should include some program evaluation in terms of applying standardized testing to students. Neither of these is currently practised.

a) General Description & Goals

Students take their first course in literature only after having acquired a reasonably solid language competence (oral and written) represented by French 202 - three semesters subsequent to Grade 12 French.

The program consists of fifteen courses ranging from the introductory and general to the advanced and specific. All courses are given in French and students are expected to do all written and oral assignments in French.

All students with a declared program in French are required to take either French 230 or 240. These introductory courses are designed to give the student a sampling of contemporary creativity and thought as seen in literary texts (novels, plays, short stories, screenplays, poetry) from Quebec or France. For a fair proportion of non-francophone students these courses represent the first occasion upon which they will study a full-length, unabridged text in a literary as opposed to a language-learning perspective. Consequently, the main objective of these courses is to introduce students to the structural techniques of literary analysis. Basic concepts of theme, composition, narrative devices and problems of genre are presented. The works are also related to their socio-cultural background.

At the 300 level, the second introductory course (360) extends and reinforces chosen techniques of literary analysis. Texts selected for this purpose are chosen from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Students thus have a diachronic view of French literature and literary movements as well as exposure to and practice of a variety of analytical tools. This course is required of all students following a French Major program; Minors may choose between this course and its equivalent in French linguistics (i.e. French 306).

In these introductory courses, classes consist of discussions, individual oral presentations (10-15 minutes according to class size), and

short written essays on assigned topics. This latter task is, of course, the most arduous for the non-francophone students. While little or no library research is required at this level, students do, on average, 2-3 hours preparation per class hour. Classes meet three times a week.

After completing the two introductory courses, students have access to the 400-level genre (3 hrs/week) or/and period (4 hrs/week) courses in French and Québec literatures. Every semester, the student may choose from two to three 400-level literature courses, all of which are given in French.

Depending on the instructor, these advanced courses place emphasis on aspects of cultural history or problems of literary theory; however, all involve close textual analysis. On the average, 6/7 complete novels - plays etc. are studied in a thirteen-week period.

Three courses and one seminar are designed for students wishing an in-depth study of either a specific topic, genre, author or theoretical problem. The main purpose of these courses is to focus on applying concepts and methods of linguistic analysis to the study of literature.

Two service courses, given in English, one at the 100 level, the other at the 300 level, deal with culture and civilization, and with French-Canadian Literature in translation. These courses do not count for Majors, Minors, Honours in French and usually attract students in the Humanities or taking various certificates or joint programs in Liberal Arts, English, Canadian Studies.

b) Strengths of the literature program

A small, coherent program mounted by a limited number of faculty can lead to unanimity as to purpose. Thus, there is general agreement on the necessity

- a) to develop a reliable set of analytical tools
- b) to allow a variety of interpretations/orientations
- c) to develop skills for presentation of a specific point of view.

This eclectic approach is skill-oriented and, because of the particular make-up of the Department with its strong linguistics component, the

linking of the two disciplines (literature & linguistics) has been inherent in the program's philosophy since at least 1970. Unlike other universities where this linking process is carried out by faculty who have a literary preparation and a strong interest in linguistics, in this Department the two disciplines are together, under the same roof, but taught by specialists in each discipline, independent but complementary.

c) Weaknesses of the literature program

There are lacunae in certain fields. The 300 level would benefit from an additional course to give a greater breadth of preparation for the 400 level courses. Such a course could be developed to give a panoramic view of literature, culture and civilization.

At the 400 level, the areas of cinema, feminist literature, francophone literature outside Quebec and France all represent domains of significant relevance to a literature program and need to be incorporated through the establishment of new courses.

3) Linguistics Program

a) General Description & Goals

In its beginnings, the French Linguistic program was closely allied to the program in General Linguistics; it was generally believed that any university language program should have a strong linguistic base. Applied linguistics determined the methods of teaching French as a second language, and General Linguistics courses (in English) were required of students majoring in French. One consequence of the priority thus assigned to the domain of linguistics was that the French program very early evolved a basic French linguistics program covering phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Over the first ten years, this program became more elaborate, finally reaching, in the mid-eighties, its present state.

Currently, the French Linguistics program covers most aspects of the French language perceived as a linguistic system within some theoretical framework. However, the main emphasis of the program is not to teach linguistic theories for the sake of the theories themselves (as may be the

case in a department of General Linguistics) but rather as a means to achieve insights into the structure and functioning of the French language. Consequently, the Department has not restricted itself to one school of linguistics, but adopts a variety of theoretical stances (from French linguists as well as non-French linguists) best serving the analysis of specific aspects of the French language.

The French Linguistics program therefore aims to permit students to achieve an understanding of the formal structure of the French language in all its aspects and the ability to analyze French data. The program takes into consideration the particular needs of students wishing to become teachers of French, in that it offers a course in applied linguistics (applied to the teaching of French) and gives some basic exposure to practical phonetics and to sociolinguistic problems.

The program consists of one introductory course at the 300-level and of ten courses at the 400-level, not including the four 400-level courses serving the needs of both literature and linguistics.

For the student, the introductory course - French 306 - represents the bridge between a knowledge of French (i.e. the ability to use the language) and a knowledge about French (i.e. how to approach, analyze and describe various linguistic aspects of the French language). The student must therefore have acquired a reasonably solid language competence (oral and written) before entering French 306 (i.e. having completed at least French 202).

At the 400 level, the French linguistics program covers the major areas of linguistic analysis of French (phonology, morphology and syntax, semantics and lexicology) from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. It deals also with varieties (social, regional and stylistic) as well as with French linguistic theories and theories of Second Language Acquisition.

The program is deemed to constitute a coherent study of French seen as a linguistic system.

b) Strengths of the linguistics program

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Four specific factors account for what can be seen as the strength of the linguistics program. First, the program was elaborated from the start by faculty whose formation tended to be as general linguists using French as the object language. Second, faculty represent a fairly broad range of theoretical viewpoints, both European and North American. Third, the program consists of a coherent body of core courses with a number of dependent but more peripheral courses. Fourth, linguistics and literature are seen as interdependent and efforts are made in both areas to show the links with, and the importance of, the other.

While all the courses aim to make students conversant with a theoretical stance as well as methodological and analytical processes, these are never emphasized to the point where the data - namely the French language - is lost sight of. In short, the objective of the linguistics program is principally to offer a deeper understanding of, and greater insights into, the French language and its functioning.

c) Weaknesses of the linguistics program

Unlike the literature program, the linguistics program has no 200 level introductory course. This means that the sole introduction that students have to the points of view and the methodological approaches adopted by linguistics is in terms of French 306. It is apparent that a course consisting of 39 class hours cannot hope to cover the basic concepts relating to the study of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology and semantics. These however, are the areas treated by the 400 level courses to which 306 is the introduction. Certain important aspects of these areas therefore tend to be glossed over, depending on the particular faculty member giving the course. It is therefore desirable that some effort be made to split the content of 306 and establish the first introductory course at the 200 level. Given the limitations on the number of lower level prerequisites that a department may require for entry into upper levels major programs, this constitutes a problem.

The courses constituting the program consist of a body of fixed content courses. A greater degree of flexibility (to answer applied needs and student interests) could be achieved by the addition of one or two (variable content) topics courses.

register in 400-level courses have had to be denied. The situation at the 300-level (affecting *required* language, literature and linguistics courses) is as bad.

2. FRENCH GRADUATES

Table 6: Graduates (majors/minors) per year
1979/80 - 89/90*

Year	Majors	Minor	Total
79/80	23	8	31
80/81	10	8	18
81/82	12	5	17
82/83	17	9	26
83/84	10	8	18
84/85	18	12	30
85/86	16	11	27
86/87	22	11	33
87/88	14	12	26
88/89	19	11	30
89/90	37	29	66
Totals 1980-1990	198	124	332

* Source: Office of Analytical Studies

5. COMPARISON WITH OTHER FRENCH DEPARTMENTS

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Table 10: Survey of a selection of French Departments across Canada (1989/90 Academic Year)

Faculty	SFU	Calg	Dalh	McGill	Queens	Regina	Toron.	Winn.	Vict.	York
Prof.	1	6	8	8	4	2	28	3	2	3
Assoc.Prof	5	10	4	8	7	6	45	2	3	10
Assist.Prof	1	3	4	5	5	1	6	1	10	4
Total:	7	19	16	21	16	9	79	6	15	17
Undergrad Students										
Lower lev.	693	1150			1077	1027	2173	300	382	1151
Upper lev.	344	1000			279	675	828	300	254	605
%Upper	33.2	46.5			20.6	39.7	27.6	50	39	34.5
Total:	1037	2150	92	132	1356	1702	3001	600	636	1756
Graduate										
Masters	6	10	29	77	15	1	15	0	0	0
Doctoral	1	1	7	44	6	0	41	0	0	0
Total:	7	11	36	121	21	1	56	0	0	0

* Source: Office of Analytical Studies

Table 10 serves to indicate the understaffing of the Department relative to other Departments of French in a small

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sequence. This would be particularly valuable at the 206 and 301 levels.

Increasing numbers of Immersion Program students means that we should be planning to expand the frequency of French 216 and also be planning a follow-up course.

Line
course It is intended that we introduce a 100 or 200 level course entitled **The pronunciation of French**. This will be designed to handle the pronunciation problems of students and particularly of those students whose mother tongue is not necessarily English.

The number of native French speakers wishing to enrol in the program is increasing. French 199 (offered as a distance-education course) does not entirely answer their review/remedial needs; a new course (French 299) is in the process of development.

2. LITERATURE PROGRAM

1) Changes proposed

In the perceptions of anglophone students, students with native fluency who nevertheless need to take the introductory literature courses at the 200 level pose problems. There is a need to develop a correspondence course dealing with the introduction to literary analysis as an alternative to 230/240.

There is a need for a further intermediate course at the 300 level that would furnish a panoramic view of francophone culture and civilization as reflected in literature.

The program should be expanded at the fourth-year level by the creation of courses dealing with cinema, feminist literature and francophone literature outside of Québec and France.

3. LINGUISTICS PROGRAM

1) Changes proposed

The content of Fren 306-3 Introduction to French Linguistics must be lightened by the creation of a new 200-level course. This can be done most profitably by a new course entitled Introduction to French phonetics where the basics of phonetics, the IPA and basic concepts of phonology will be taught.

The highly structured content of the courses at the 400 level needs to be made more flexible by the introduction of two topics courses which can be used to deal with the practical applications of linguistics to sociolinguistic or pedagogic concerns.

1) Changes proposed

No new courses are envisaged at the present time, but we believe that in order to broaden the program's appeal and to attract more students, we need to develop special topics courses offering the possibility of exploring specialized subjects.

The M. A. - Teaching of French Program - as currently set up - will be difficult to revive both in practical, economic and staffing terms and in terms of some of its content and aims. Nevertheless, there is a strong feeling that a Master's program of this sort can fill an increasingly important need in the teaching profession at both the school and the college level. It is hoped that our ongoing co-operation with the Faculty of Education will lead to the establishment of some shared program.

We believe that it is imperative that the French graduate program as it exists be "repatriated" - that is, that it be made in principle what it is in fact, a program administered by, mounted by and directed by the Department of French. In short, it should cease to be a part of an overall program given the ambiguous and indeed inaccurate title of Program in Languages and Linguistics, and become the sole responsibility of what, in all aspects except graduate studies, is the autonomous Department of French. Quite apart from the advantages to academic reputation that such a move would create, it would in a practical sense simplify some complex administrative situations and also require the university to share graduate funding in a more equitable manner in that Teaching Assistantships and Scholarships would be assigned individually to the Departments of French, of Linguistics and of Spanish and not simply assigned as a lump sum to be fought over by comparing students in essentially different programs.