FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Evaluation of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
Department of Linguistics
Cyclical Review Period: 2020–2021
Date: December 2, 2021

I.   Evaluated Programs

- Honours BA with specialization in Linguistics
- Major in Linguistics
- MA in Linguistics
- PhD in Linguistics

II.   Evaluation Process (outline of the visit)

- This final evaluation report on the above program was prepared from the following documents: (a) the self-study report produced by the academic unit, (b) the report of the external evaluation following the virtual visit, and (c) the comments of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Kevin Kee, the Chair of the Department of Linguistics, Éric Mathieu, the Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Tania Zamuner, and the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, Laura Sabourin, to the report in (b).
- The site visit, which took place on April 29-30, 2021, was conducted by Dr. Sonya Bird, University of Victoria, and Dr. Keren Rice, University of Toronto.
- During their visit, the external evaluators met with the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Claire Turenne-Sjolander, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Aline Germain-Rutherford, the Vice-Dean, Programs, of the Faculty of Arts, Marc Charron, the Chair of the Department, Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, regular and part-time faculty, support staff, and undergraduate and graduate students.

III.   Summary of Reports on the Quality of Programs[1]

> This section aims to inform the unit on the strengths and weaknesses observed during the evaluation process to improve its programs.

1.   EMPHASIZING THE STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES

STRENGTHS

- Well ranked department, with international stature, 27th worldwide in 2019 QS ranking for linguistics. Accordingly, the faculty members are well funded and have received many accolades.
- Laboratories are supplied with state-of-the-art facilities. They are in proximity one of another, which fosters a sense of community. But also, some of these laboratories, such as the uOttawa Living Lab, are quite unique for a Department of Linguistics.
- The Joint Honours Psychology-Linguistics program is unique.
- Impressive number of undergraduate students working in faculty laboratories.
- Vibrant and supportive community.

---

[1] Based on every document prepared during the assessment process.

- The current lack of a semanticist among the faculty members threatens the department's ability to offer courses related to that core area of linguistics.
- Although most professors in the department can teach in both official languages, the current number of regular professors limits the capacity of the department to offer courses in French, namely for elective courses.
- The funding packages offered to graduate students are seen as no longer competitive, which has a direct impact on students' recruitment.
- There is a need to better integrate the part-time professors into the department.

2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- The mission and identity of the Department of Linguistics are clearly defined, and the program requirements and associated learning outcomes are appropriate for the field.
- The external evaluation report raised concerns regarding questions of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Department of Linguistics takes these questions very seriously. As a department, it strives to follow the recommendations from the Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities, as well as REIL (Resources on Equity and Inclusion in Linguistics). The format of the evaluation and the constraints imposed may have resulted in oversights or misinterpretation. Nevertheless, the Department is committed to continuing its efforts to strengthen this fundamental aspect of our collective mission.

3. CURRICULUM AND STRUCTURE

- The structure of the undergraduate programs was found to be in line with of undergraduate programs in North America. However, the department will need to pay close attention to the offering of courses for the Francophone population. The challenges include a limited number of elective courses offered in French, the mismatch between the calendar and the actual course offering, the delivery of bilingual courses, which are perceived as "not very effective".
- The graduate programs were found to be well designed. The reviews suggest investigating if a course on quantitative methods would be useful, especially for a program with a strong focus on experimental research.

4. TEACHING, LEARNING AND EVALUATION METHODS
- The learning objectives and methods of evaluation are in line with the expectations for Linguistics. What stands out as a specific strength is the many opportunities for students to contribute to experimental research. Many undergraduate students are working in the laboratories giving the opportunity for many of them to be involved in presentations and publications.

5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

- The interviews and surveys with students indicate a strong sense of satisfaction and belonging.

- The students raised concerns regarding the difficulties with navigating and finding relevant information on the University Web sites.
- Graduate students are generally happy with the mentorship they receive. However, some confusion around supervisory roles and responsibilities during the candidacy process, and who should be guiding them in writing each of their qualifying papers. Some students also expressed concerns about how the impact of COVID on their productivity will be taken into account.

6. **PHYSICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

- Feedback from the faculty and students regarding the physical resources are "very positive". Again, the laboratories stand out as a strong aspect of this evaluation.
- Part-time faculty members share a common space, which causes issues during office hours. But also, the evaluation identified the need for a better integration of part-time faculty members.
- "Almost all faculty members have funded research programs (at the time of the self-study; most of these are from SSHRC, with one from NSERC, and one CRC), and are able to integrate research into their teaching activities, providing students with excellent research experience as part of their training."
- The external evaluators make two recommendations that are linked with the hiring of faculty members. First, the recent departure of a professor working in the area of semantics constitutes a serious problem for the department. In their own words, "It is simply not possible to have a strong graduate program without someone who works in the area of semantics" (see recommendation #1). The second hiring is to alleviate challenges offering courses to the Francophone student population (see recommendation #2).

IV. **Program Improvements[2]**

> The programs under evaluation are in conformity with the standards of the discipline. The following recommendations aim at maintaining or increasing the level of quality already achieved by the programs.

Recommendation #1: Hire a semanticist.

Recommendation #2: Hire someone to teach in the French program.

Recommendation #3: Increase equity, diversity, and inclusion in course content and faculty complement.

Recommendation #4: Integrate part-time professors into the department.

Recommendation #5: Increase scholarship and award opportunities for students, Francophone students and graduate students in particular.

Recommendation #6: Align undergraduate courses in the calendar with courses actually offered.

Recommendation #7: Consider the possible inclusion of community-based research

---

[2] Based on the External Evaluation Report.

> **Recommendation #8:** Consider adding a required research methods course to the undergraduate program.

V. List of courses not offered for more than three years and the reasons

> **Recommendation #9:** The SCEUP requests a list of all courses featured during the last three years on the course calendar as either mandatory or optional to the programs, mentioning the last semester during which each course was offered and the reasons for the lack of offer. The SCEUP also requests that itemized plans towards either offering the courses or removing them from the calendar be included. Courses offered in French and in English should be listed as separate entries with information provided for each course.

VI. Conclusion

The external reviewers concluded that "the University of Ottawa Department of Linguistics is outstanding in terms of research, teaching, and training of students". The faculty members involved with the program are well funded. Several aspects of the laboratories are worth mentioning. They are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. The participation of many undergraduate students in these laboratories is most impressive. Finally, across Canada, few departments of linguistics have laboratories such as the uOttawa Living Lab, which tends to be hosted in psychology departments.

Nevertheless, the external evaluation also identified areas for further evolution. Namely, the department is encouraged to continue its efforts to follow the recommendations from the Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities, as well as REIL (Resources on Equity and Inclusion in Linguistics).

Schedule and Timelines

The next cyclical review will take place in no more than eight years, in 2027–2028. The self-study brief must be submitted no later than June 15, 2027.

Unit Response to the External Assessment Report and Action Plan

Faculty:

Arts

Department:

Department of Linguistics

Programs evaluated:

Honours BA in Linguistics

Major in Linguistics

BA in Psychology and Linguistics

MA in Linguistics

PhD in Linguistics

Cyclical review period:

2020–2021

Date: 2022-02-21

General comments

We have read the external evaluators' report on our programs, and we thank them for their valuable insights. We are delighted to see that our department and programs were found to be excellent: "*The University of Ottawa Department of Linguistics is outstanding in terms of research, teaching, and training of students.*" Despite a shortage of resources these past few years, our department ranked 27th in the world in 2019 (the final year in the cyclical review period), making our unit the highest ranked at the University of Ottawa as a whole—a veritable accomplishment that could be publicized more widely (e.g., article in University newsletter, promotional materials).

However, as the assessment report clearly states, we are facing a series of challenges at present. Our ranking fell in 2020, a direct result of our staff shortage. We need to replace regular professors who are retiring or leaving for greener pastures elsewhere, so that we can continue our research efforts and maintain our international level of excellence.

We also still have a way to go when it comes to equity, and we will be working on that.

Recommendation 1: Hire a semanticist.				
Unit response: Accepted unconditionally (but depends on the Faculty/University). We agree, but hiring and distribution of positions are outside the Unit's control. For that, we need the assistance and support of the Faculty of Arts and the University especially.				
Priority	**Actions to be undertaken**	**Assigned to**	**Timeline**	**Program changes?**
1	Seek authorization from the Faculty of Arts and the Dean's support. Submit a new staffing request during the central administration's annual competition.	Faculty/University	Urgent	No

Recommendation 2: Hire someone to teach in the French program.				
Unit response: We believe that this position specializing in French linguistics should be a permanent role. Hiring and distribution of positions are outside the Unit's control. For that, we need the assistance and support of the Faculty of Arts and the University especially.				
Priority	**Actions to be undertaken**	**Assigned to**	**Timeline**	**Program changes?**
1	Seek authorization from the Faculty of Arts and the Dean's support. Submit a new staffing request during the central administration's annual competition.	Faculty/University	Urgent	No

Recommendation 3: Increase equity, diversity and inclusion in course content and faculty complement.

Unit response: We are willing to hire preferentially for the purpose of recruiting one or more racialized professors. However, for that, the Faculty of Arts and the University will have to invest more resources in hiring. The availability of positions is outside the Unit's control. We agree that the diversity of our syllabi and teaching needs to be reviewed. As a matter of fact, we began examining that issue last summer.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
1	Hire an EDI individual, review syllabi content and increase diversity.	Faculty/University/Unit	Urgent	No

Recommendation 4: Integrate part-time professors into the Department.				
Unit response: We agree with the external reviewers that part-time professors need to be integrated more, especially given their increasing numbers due to the fact that regular professors are not being systematically replaced. Part-time professors have a room available to them, in addition to another one that graduate students let them use on a regular basis. We are prepared to give them a larger room or a second room. However, space allocation and management are outside our control (the Faculty and University make the decisions in that regard). The part-time professors' representative is always invited to—and is always present at—Department meetings. However, they are not invited to the professors' meetings, which is customary because student assessments and other confidential matters are discussed. Regular professors are invited to lab meetings and research groups. Many of the part-time professors are PhD students. As such, they regularly present their research projects in their classes, research groups and labs. It is not clear whether non-student part-time professors are still actively engaged in research, which limits their opportunities for collaboration with other members of the Department. Creating a "best part-time professor" award is a good idea, and we are willing to integrate those professors more.				
Priority	**Actions to be undertaken**	**Assigned to**	**Timeline**	**Program changes?**
1	Find an appropriate space, issue invitations to activities, establish an award.	Faculty/University/Unit	June 2022	No

Recommendation 5: Increase scholarship and funding opportunities for students, Francophone students and graduate students in particular.

Unit response: Student funding is decided by the Faculty and University, not the Department. Clearly, we are no longer competitive, and we are losing students to other programs in Canada and elsewhere, especially Canadian students (for example, this year, we lost three excellent students to MIT, Carleton and McMaster). The external reviewers recommended that we accept fewer PhD students in order to minimize non-funded student cases. We are going to implement that recommendation. The new system does indeed have the advantage of producing better funding conditions for international students, which will definitely boost equity. We can certainly work on creating more scholarships/internal awards for students. However, they are highly dependent on donors, the groundwork for which is incumbent on the Faculty of Arts.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Continue seeking support from the Faculty and University. Work with the University of Ottawa's Office of the Vice-President, International and Francophonie.	Faculty/University	Important	No

Recommendation 6: Align undergraduate courses in the calendar with courses actually offered.

Unit response: The lack of elective courses in French is due not only to the limited number of regular professors, but also to the fact that the Faculty of Arts sets a maximum number of courses we can offer each year (say, 46). That is too few for our program. We rotate courses to ensure there will be enough Francophone students (whose number has unfortunately been trending downward over the years). Investment is needed to have a true bilingual program, and the University will have to contribute more money and positions for there to be more courses in French.

However, we always make sure to offer the minimum number of courses required each year so that Francophone students can finish their program on time. Until we have evidence to the contrary, we can say that no student has had to stay longer in the program in order to finish it. Students also receive information about courses scheduled over the next four years (that information is communicated at the January departmental meeting attended by the representative, and is also sent out by email). In addition, they receive that information every summer during the registration period.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Clean up the catalogue.	Unit	June 2022	No

*Priority level: 1. URGENT — IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT — ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED, AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).

Recommendation 7: Consider the possible inclusion of community-based research.				
Unit response: We are already doing that, something the external reviewers failed to mention. We are going to continue our efforts.				

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Continue our efforts in that regard.	Unit	Important	No

Recommendation 8: Consider adding a required research methods course to the undergraduate program.				
Unit response: Accepted. Students are already taking part in lab activities.				
Priority	**Actions to be undertaken**	**Assigned to**	**Timeline**	**Program changes?**
2	Create a course.	Unit	2024	No