

**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
**Evaluation of Graduate Programs**  
**Department of Modern Languages and Literatures**  
**Faculty of Arts**  
**Cycle: 2020–2021**  
**Date: 2022-04-06**

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**I. Programs**

- Master of Arts Spanish
- Doctorate in Philosophy Spanish

**II. Evaluation Process (Outline of the visit)**

- The Final Assessment Report for the evaluation of the programs was based on the following documents: (a) the self-study brief produced by the academic unit, (b) the report produced by the external evaluators following their site visit, and (c) the comments from the Department Chair, Luis Abanto, the Director of the program, Elena Valenzuela, and the Dean, Kevin Kee, on the aforementioned documents.
- The site visit, which took place on May 20, 2021, was conducted by Professor Almeida Jacqueline Toribio, University of Texas, and Professor Goretti Ramírez, Concordia University.
- The visit was conducted virtually due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The reviewers were provided a comprehensive self-study brief that had been previously approved by the curriculum committee on September 20, 2020. The virtual visit included Richard Maclure from the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, as internal delegate.
- During the site visit, the external evaluators met with the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Claire Turenne-Sjolander, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Kevin Kee, the Vice-Dean, Programs, Marc Charron, the Department Chair, Luis Abanto, the Director of the Programs, Elena Valenzuela, members of the support staff, regular professors, and graduate students.

**III. Summary of Reports on the Quality of Programs<sup>1</sup>**

**1. EMPHASIZING THE STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES**

**Strengths**

- An extremely supportive and dedicated cohort of faculty members.
- Student satisfaction is high.
- Small cohorts and class sizes.
- The possibility of completing the master's degree in one year.
- Distinctive interdisciplinary, multilingual, and transnational focus.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on every document prepared during the assessment process, often extracted verbatim.

## Challenges

- Limited resources; in particular, a small number of regular faculty members.
- A paucity of courses and a lack of breadth of courses in Spanish.
- Uncertainty regarding the availability of the physical space for the program once the pandemic is over.

## 2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- The objective of the Spanish programs is “to provide advanced training in the literatures and cultures of Spain and Latin America, as well as in Hispanic linguistics, benefiting from the theoretical and comparative research interests of the professors of the department”.
- “The graduate programs in Spanish develop the four Core Aspirations of the University of Ottawa’s Transformation 2030 Strategic Plan.”
- “The learning outcomes of the MA and PhD in Spanish are aligned with the University of Ottawa’s statement of Degree Level Expectations and the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV).”

## 3. CURRICULUM AND STRUCTURE

- The admission requirements of both programs are well aligned with their program learning outcomes. However, given that proficiency in Spanish is paramount to achieving the program learning outcomes, the external reviewers “recommend the MA requirement 'Writing Sample (preferably in Spanish)' to be changed to 'Writing sample (in Spanish)'.”
- The structure of the Spanish graduate programs is developed around literature, culture, and linguistics, which “remains the most established approach to the discipline in Canada”.
- “Some of the most innovative topics covered by faculty members in the area of literature and culture (including research, teaching, and thesis supervision) include transculturation in Spanish American art, Latino-Canadian literature, Latin American literature and intermediality, Latin American popular art and cinema, Black USA and Spain, Equatoguinean literature and Spain, ethnic and religious communities in medieval and early-modern Mediterranean cultures, and medieval and early-modern interactions between Spain, Italy, and Portugal.”
- The Spanish MA and PhD programs are undergoing significant transformations. Nobly, the academic unit is proposing to abolish the thesis option of the master’s degree and to create a course-based option. The other changes involve reducing the number of required courses.
- The external evaluation has found gaps in the course offering, most notably, there is no graduate course in Colonial Spanish American Literatures and Cultures.

## 4. TEACHING, LEARNING AND EVALUATION METHODS

- Seminar format is the main mode of delivery in the Spanish program. This format fosters cooperative learning. The documentation highlights the fact that the teaching is effective and inclusive.
- “Importantly, all students are granted the opportunity to teach during their tenure in the graduate program”. These activities are supported by a pedagogy seminar, as well as workshops.
- “By all evaluative measures, the program presents a profile of achievement in the area of teaching and learning outcomes.”

## 5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

- The self-study brief and the interviews confirm that the sense of belonging is well developed among students, who themselves also contribute to the support of the community.
- In the words of the external reviewers, “[t]he faculty are productive scholars who bring prestige to the program and visibility to the university”. They are dedicated to their teaching and student supervision.
- Students and faculty members expressed concerns over the limited resources available for the program. In particular, the small number of regular professors has a direct impact on the breadth of courses in Spanish.

## 6. PHYSICAL SPACES AND RESOURCES

- Faculty members and students praise the departmental and graduate studies staff who carry out countless tasks despite limited resources.
- During the pandemic, a significant share of the physical space dedicated to the program has been reallocated to IT services to support online teaching activities. It remains to be determined how these physical resources will be reassigned in the future.
- The collections and services offered by the library are “central to achieving the program’s missions.” Faculty and students in the Spanish program have commented with satisfaction on the level of support offered by the library.

## IV. Program Improvement<sup>2</sup>

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:** Increase the breadth and number of graduate courses in Spanish and alleviate the professors’ workload of graduate supervision.

**Recommendation 2:** Maintain a comfortable workplace.

**Recommendation 3:** Expand program activities.

**Recommendation 4:** Continue efforts to promote retention and degree completion in the PhD program.

**Recommendation 5:** Improve the publicity of the graduate programs.

**Recommendation 6:** Improve the criterion to assess Spanish proficiency in admission requirements for the MA in Spanish.

**Recommendation 7:** Hire a tenure-track faculty member.

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

GPEC is requesting a list of courses that have not been offered for more than three years. Please distinguish between mandatory or optional courses. GPEC also requests an itemized plan towards either offering the courses or removing them from the calendar be included.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the External Evaluation Report.

## **VI. Conclusion**

According to the external reviewers consulted, the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures offers excellent Spanish programs. The faculty's dedication to the graduate programs and the excellent mentoring were praised by both the students and reviewers. "High levels of student satisfaction are, indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of the graduate programs in Spanish." Suggestions for improvement are primarily connected to limited resources, namely the number of full-time professors associated with the Spanish programs, which has a direct impact on the breadth of courses in Spanish.

Considering this positive assessment, the committee members would like to thank all participants for the evaluation of the programs. They congratulate the unit on the rigour of the work accomplished and on the quality of the self-study report, as well as that of the report produced by the external reviewers.

### **Schedule and Timelines**

A progress report describing the various actions completed and the results obtained is expected no later than December 15, 2024.

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 2027.

## Unit Response to the External Review Report and Action Plan

### Faculty:

- Faculty of Arts

### Department:

- Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

### Programs evaluated: Master in Spanish – PhD in Spanish

- Master of Arts Spanish
- Doctorate in Philosophy Spanish

### Cyclical review period:

- 2020-2021

### Date:

- September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

**Note: This document is submitted to the Senate, as well as the Quality Council, and will be published on the University Web site.**

### General comments:

On July 20, 2021, the External Review Report produced in the context of the cyclical program evaluation was communicated to the Spanish graduate program. We were extremely pleased with the positive evaluation of our graduate program. Given that the Spanish graduate program has committed to providing an outstanding training and research experience, we were gratified to see that the external reviewers found that our “MA and PhD programs were of excellent quality”, that, with respect to the intellectual experience, “the program prepares students to think critically and encourages independence of thought; as a consequence, it boasts a student cohort with active research trajectories that reflect diverse passions in the areas of literature, culture and linguistics. A minute sampling of the varied topics that they are pursuing includes: forced migration in literature, public art as political representation, and heritage Spanish-language maintenance and loss in immigrant communities of Canada. The students are regular presenters at national and international conferences, and a number have successfully vied for coveted grants and awards, including the competitive SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship”, in addition “high levels of student satisfaction are, indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of the graduate programs in Spanish” and that “no major issues with the program, the learning objectives, courses or management of the programs were discovered”. The report makes 7 recommendations, of which only one is considered high priority. We take all of the recommendations seriously and feel confident that by addressing them, our graduate program will be even stronger. The recommendations and our response, produced jointly by the unit and the Faculty, are included below.

<b>Recommendation 1:</b> Increase the breadth and number of graduate courses in Spanish, and alleviate the professors' workload of graduate supervision.					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed. We acknowledge the need for an increase in the breadth and number of graduate ESP courses available for students (also see recommendation 7). While, at present, we are not able to increase the number of graduate seminars taught by Spanish faculty, we are working on collaborations with other departments to provide greater breadth.	1	The Department Chair will develop a strong case for hiring a new faculty member (potentially in collaboration with another department) and submit the proposal to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts	Chair of Department	Fall 2022	no

\* PRIORITY LEVEL : 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)

<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Maintain a comfortable workplace.					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed. However, this issue is currently complicated by pandemic measures. Training, support, and tools for online and hybrid courses will also be necessary to create a comfortable and supportive workplace.	3	We will meet with graduate students to understand the nature of the problems and issues that are negatively affecting their student experience. Once the true nature of the problem is understood. We will be able to make meaningful changes for the better.	Program director	Fall 2022-2026	no

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<b>Recommendation 3: Expand program activities.</b>					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed. The budget for the department has not increased in 15 years. We have depended on the volunteer work of students and faculty. We agree that this model may not be sustainable and an increase in operating budget is necessary to expand program activities moving forward.	3	The Graduate Committee will write a proposal asking for the department operating budget to be increased. The Chair of the Department will then submit the request to the Dean. Additionally, SASS (Student Academic Success Service) and the faculties to identify all current central, faculty and departmental support offered to students. SASS is also looking into best practices and determining what the needs are for programs and students. A plan will be put forward to improve academic support offered to graduate students by SASS in the next coming months.	Chair of Department	Fall 2022	no

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<b>Recommendation 4:</b> Continue efforts to promote retention and degree completion in the PhD program.					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed.	3	<p>Continue efforts to promote retention and degree completion in the PhD program by closely monitoring student progress by the program director as well as the Thesis Advisory Committee. The director of the program will obtain statistics every two years to that the ‘time to completion’ situation can be re-assessed regularly.</p> <p>Our program will request to be added to a university pilot project for a “grad mapping tool” (as done at a few universities, see example here). This tool is meant to support students and supervisors while improving time to completion.</p>	Program Director	Fall 2022-2026	no

\* PRIORITY LEVEL : 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)

<b>Recommendation 5: Improve the publicity of the graduate programs.</b>					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed.	3	1) Revamp the PhD section of the Department's website, with emphasis on the new funding system for international graduate students.	1) University of Ottawa, Quality Assurance Office	Fall 2022-2026	no
		2) Post news about the academic achievements of graduate students, alumni, and faculty members (grants, thesis defenses, job placements, publications, etc.) on the Department's FB, IG, Twitter, and webpages	2) Program Director	Fall 2022-2026	no

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<b>Recommendation 6:</b> Improve the criterion to assess Spanish proficiency in admission requirements for the MA in Spanish.					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed.	3	Change the MA admission requirement “Writing Sample (preferably in Spanish)” to “Writing sample (in Spanish)”	Program Director	resolved	no

\* PRIORITY LEVEL : 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)

<b>Recommendation 7: Hire a tenure-track faculty member.</b>					
<b>Unit response</b>	<b>Priority Level*</b>	<b>Actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Curriculum change?</b>
Agreed. As in recommendation 1, the unit agrees with the hiring of a new tenure-track faculty member with a complementary yet distinct research profile to add breadth to the ESP program	1	Create and advocate for a tenure-track position in ESP. As in recommendation 1, the Department Chair will develop a strong case for hiring a new faculty member (potentially in collaboration with another department) and submit the proposal to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. This proposal for a new hire will be in line with the need for breadth and diversity of the program offerings.	Department Chair	Fall 2022	no

\* PRIORITY LEVEL : 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)