

Date: June 23rd, 2015

To: Dr. John Shepherd, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic); Chair,
Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance

Cc: Dr. Peter Ricketts, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
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Dr. Matthias Neufang, Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
Dr. Catherine Khordoc, Associate Dean (Student Affairs), Faculty of Arts and Social
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From: Dr. Pascal Gin, Chair, Department of French

This document reports on the progress over the 2014-2015 academic year with respect to the measures detailed in the departmental Action Plan, submitted to CUCQA on October 14th, 2014. This document will also report on the three points subsequently raised by CUCQA in its memorandum dated November 13th, 2014.

GENERAL

1. Replacement of Retired Faculty

In the fall of 2014, the Chair of the Department submitted a staffing request for a Preliminary position at the rank of Instructor 1. Given the attrition of departmental expertise in the area of French language instruction, the Department paid meticulous attention to the academic training and professional skill sets attached to the position. The required qualifications included completion of doctoral studies in second language acquisition, at least four years of teaching

experience and documented experience in at least two areas key to growing programs and enrolments. This request was subsequently approved and the departmental Hiring Committee proceeded with the interview stage in May 2015. This stage resulted in a failed search, however. The Committee will reassess the position's requirements in the fall of 2015 and proceed with a new search to be completed in the 2016 winter term.

2. Applying for External Research Funding

A detailed cross-sectorial breakdown of faculty research interests and activities is being compiled and will be communicated to CURO shortly in the hope of identifying non-tricouncil funding opportunities. In light of the current trends and latest figures on SSHRC's grant competition and given the sustained departmental rate of application over the past five years, diversifying sources of potential research funding is seen as a viable option. Measures to lighten administrative duties for faculty during the research intensive spring-summer period yielded mixed results since the Department reverted to a committee model for certain tasks tackled in late May. Sustaining appropriate working conditions for research purposes over the spring and summer remains, nonetheless, a priority.

BACHELOR'S PROGRAM

3. Increasing Opportunities for Exposure to Spoken French

As per the Action Plan, efforts in 2014-2015 were focused on promoting the Spring Seminar in Québec City, setting up a one-term exchange opportunity in a francophone Québec university, engaging students with the many opportunities already in place to perfect their spoken French (including the Co-op program), and creating in-class motivation for seeking these out of classroom opportunities.

3.1 Seminar in Québec City

The Spring Seminar in Québec City was intensively promoted through internal social media by means of a series of articles. It was also fully integrated into departmental efforts to advise students on their course selection through a promotional brochure and targeted communications with upper-year students during the March advising campaign. In an effort to broaden the pool of targeted students, the seminar was brought to the attention of the International Students Services Office.

3.2 One-term exchange opportunity in a francophone Québec university

Over the past two terms, the Department laid the groundwork for implementing a one-term exchange in the province of Québec targeted at Honours students. The Department engaged in discussions with the Registrar's Office as to the best

administrative option for this initiative. The mutual agreement reached was to proceed through a standardized Letter of Permission approach. Committee work at the departmental level focused on determining the most appropriate term so that the exchange would fully benefit Honours students, choosing the best candidate institution (Université Laval) both in terms of course offerings and francophone immersion, and identifying courses to be considered for equivalencies. Consultations are underway to ensure Carleton French Majors will have access to these courses. The next steps towards implementation include consulting with Laval's admission, registration and residence services to properly review administrative procedures and lodging opportunities. Implementation is projected for either the winter term of 2016 or the winter term of 2017.

3.3 Undergraduate Academic Society

In light of the many opportunities already in place to increase oral practice, the Department is intent on fostering an environment conducive to increased student participation. Of particular relevance in this regard is the creation of a proper undergraduate academic society whose mandate will be to represent students' academic needs and initiatives but also to relay in an engaging fashion the aforementioned opportunities. With this in mind, the Department approached the current undergraduate student representative. The outcome of positive and sustained discussions over the past term is that a constitution will be filed with CUSA shortly and approval will be sought for the implementation of a student academic society. In addition to departmental social media, communication with the association ought to be an effective conduit for relaying all that the Department has to offer beyond courses per se. In addition, the association is set on launching a number of initiatives (e.g., liaising with alumni, organizing career counselling workshops, implementing study groups) that can only enrich the current practices and efforts to foster a French speaking community outside of the classroom.

3.4 Teaching Assistants

As outlined in the previous departmental response submitted to CUCQA on October 14th, 2104, significantly increasing the current outreach of weekly group discussions simply cannot be achieved without a correlated increase in fiscal TA funding. Since such an increase is not currently an option, the Department's approach must shift to reviewing the use of existing TA resources with an eye to maximizing student engagement. This review process was targeted in 2014-2105 at pooling a limited number of available TA hours to be used in-class for the purpose of increasing conversational opportunities. The intent is to promote a learning experience that very concretely draws students' attention to the benefits of increased engagement with opportunities for improving their spoken French, which they can then seek in services made available outside of the classroom (group discussions, Club Francophone, ciné-français, etc.). This pilot project will be repeated in 2015-2016, when it will specifically target required

language courses for the BA programs. The intent is to prioritize the limited scope of initiatives available to us.

4. Increasing Enrolments in the Bachelor's Program

As per the priorities set out in the departmental Action Plan, new efforts to be invested in growing undergraduate programs were assessed with targeted enrolment potential in mind. Anglophone students, the local Ottawa region and specific niches in the province were given priority when considering ways to expand current promotional efforts.

4.1 Regional and provincial recruitment

The Promotion and Conference Committee has been working on a book club initiative to engage the local high school population. Discussions with Undergraduate Recruitment identified potential for a program of events aimed at the local grade 11-12 population by means of a yearly open door French Studies Day, and at departmental university tours tailored to niche growth areas such as the high school population in the Nipissing area (in light of the bilateral agreement enabling Carleton French graduates to pursue a Bachelor's of Education at Nipissing).

4.2 Social media recruitment

The Department is also involved in a review of social media and print media visibility. Following an initial assessment of the existing departmental site and brochure in 2014-2015, the Department will undertake thorough revisions to increase engagement in promotional material starting in spring-summer 2015 (updated testimonials, improved visuals and a communication strategy more specifically aimed at an Anglophone secondary school audience).

4.3 Internal recruitment

Finally, besides developing a program of further recruitment initiatives where limited faculty resources may make a meaningful difference, the department is set on maintaining current initiatives aimed at internal recruitment. Aggressively targeting the many students already enrolled in a Minor in French remains a priority through maximising the outreach of the March Advising Campaign (which includes students enrolled in a Minor) and targeting communications to engage students in a Minor in French (with respect to special topic courses, conferences, events and extra-curricular activities). In consultation with the Faculty, the department is also intent on exploring seeking innovative ways to engage with undeclared students.

FURTHER POINTS RAISED BY CUCQA PERTAINING TO UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

5. With respect to ‘any short- or medium-term plans the Department might have devised to deal with the added stress caused by the reduced teaching load’:

The measures implemented over the short term are three-fold. First, in order to ensure that the Department can meet its undergraduate program teaching requirements despite reductions in teaching load, course offerings for compulsory introduction courses (FREN 2201 and FREN 2401) will be limited to a single section each, thus freeing two teachable credits for faculty. This first short-term measure will be reassessed after a year to evaluate the impact on retention and students’ learning experience. Because the single section approach will bring enrolment for each course to about 100 students, it will require two teaching assistants. It is not as such budget-neutral. Nevertheless, it enables the Department to maximize the teaching reach of faculty in key introductory courses rather than rely on increased contractual hiring. The second measure specifically targets language courses. Over the medium term, it involves a substantial reduction in the number of sections offered to maximise enrolment over fewer sections, reduce reliance on contractual hiring and correlated needs for coordination, and increase the presence of faculty instructors across language course offerings. Coordination of courses with multiple sections will also be reassessed over the short to medium term to ensure the most efficient use of administrative resources.

6. With respect to ‘Involving professors in 1st- and 2nd year courses’:

This recommendation was given due consideration. After carefully weighing the reasons put forward and what is entailed, the Department did not deem it to be in the programs’ interest to pursue it, for the following reasons:

The ‘weak link between 1st- 2nd upper year courses’ on which this recommendation is premised needs to be reassessed in light of two facts. First, many first-year students and a majority of French Majors actually start their French courses directly at FREN2xxx level. The weight to be given to courses in the FREN1xxx range is therefore relative. Second, given the limited number of professors in the unit, professorial faculty has actually been well represented in lower-level 2xxx courses, with at least 4 sections of courses in the past, to which must be added the FYSM 1408.

In terms of enrolment growth, courses at the FREN1xxx level offer very limited potential. For the most part, these very introductory language courses generate enrolment as service courses to a segment of the student population having to meet basic language requirements in other programs. Internal growth potential for the BA programs lies elsewhere, notably with students minoring in French and already involved in courses beyond FREN 1xxx level courses.

Pedagogically, the recommendation is not without issue with language learners at either a true

beginner or early intermediate level. These students would benefit very little from an introductory academic talk on French studies. They have not yet acquired sufficient language proficiency to be engaged with this type of initiative. True beginners and early intermediate level students must master the language at a higher level for recruitment communication to be truly effective.

Finally, whether by means of targeted information sessions, departmental talks, open house events or classroom visits, professors are already voluntarily involved in a range of sustained recruitment efforts aimed directly at students. In this context, investing additional efforts in a pool of students less likely to produce new recruits to our B.A. programs is not totally cost-effective. Limited faculty recruitment resources have greater reach and impact when properly targeting areas that offer more potential for BA enrolment.

MASTER'S PROGRAM

7. Increasing Graduate Funding

The Graduate Supervisor and Chair met with the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in Fall 2014 to discuss this question, particularly in regard to the University of Ottawa's recent policy of allowing international graduate students doing a French language program to pay domestic fee rates. The University of Ottawa's policy is a problematic and controversial one on several levels. FGPA's position is that an English language institution such as Carleton cannot implement a similar policy, as it would be difficult to justify granting this exception to only one program (i.e. French). The Faculty felt that it would be risky to set such a precedent, so our request for parity could not be granted. The Department asked that the Faculty nonetheless keep U of O's policy in mind in terms of competition. With international francophone students now constituting the bulk of graduate applications to our program, the domestic fees charged by the other local university put the department at a stark disadvantage.

8. Increasing Enrolments

8.1 Course scheduling

In planning course offerings for 2015-2016, the Graduate Studies Committee designated half of the graduate seminars (three out of six) to be offered in the evening to help attract students who work full time but who may wish to pursue an M.A. in French and Francophone Studies on a part time basis. The impact on enrolment will be closely monitored to determine whether such a measure should be maintained over the medium term.

8.2 Reassessing the English Language Requirement

Two issues regarding the English Language requirement were examined: first, the level of English proficiency and second, acceptable proofs of English proficiency.

Over the course of the Fall 2014, the Graduate Supervisor and Chair undertook consultations with FGPA and SLaLs to determine the viability of modifying the current English Language requirement. Again, doing so poses a challenge in terms of setting a precedent by granting graduate students in French an exemption from standard FGPA policies. The Faculty indicated that it would entertain lowering (rather than eliminating) the English language requirement. The Department concurs with FGPA that this is a matter of equity, since all students must have equal access to university services. The Graduate Studies Committee is recommending that rather than the TOEFL score of 86, international students in French and Francophone Studies be permitted to satisfy the language requirement with a TOEFL score between 61 and 85 (the level required for placement in ESLA 1300). This compromise is essential to addressing the negative impact on enrolments of current FGPA requirements for English proficiency.

As for assessing forms of English language evaluation that fall outside the traditional TOEFL, CAEL, and IELTS standards (such as the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English), the ESL Committee in SLaLs did not feel that evaluating such measures of language proficiency on an *ad hoc* basis would be possible due to workload issues.

8.3 Developing a promotional strategy (rebranding, targeting Anglophones in the Federal Public Service and teachers)

The Francophone studies rebranding having already taken place in 2010 with the renaming of the M.A. program (from French to French and Francophone Studies), we focused our attention on recruitment strategies. The province-wide decline of the traditional applicant pool is the main challenge to our recruitment efforts. As we do each year, we participated in FGPA's promissory letter campaign aimed at our best 4th-year students. We sent out four promissory letters and the Graduate Supervisor followed up personally with each student who received such a letter. We found that most students, if they are thinking of graduate studies, are most inclined to go on to a degree program in education.

After consultation with recruitment personnel in FGPA, the Supervisor of Graduate Studies has concluded that targeting the two populations highlighted in the External Reviewers' Report (Anglophones in the Federal Public Service and secondary school teachers in the regional English school boards) would not yield the results necessary to justify the required investment of our recruitment efforts. In addition, attracting teachers would necessitate offering M.A. level courses in July and August, which is not possible given resource constraints.

Following FGPA's advice, we have opted instead to showcase the accomplishments and careers of our alumni. The participation of an alumna was solicited

for the creation of our first promotional video, made with the assistance of FGPA. The video has been posted on the Department home page since the end of March.

The Graduate Studies supervisor followed up with all recent alumni and received several valuable testimonials about their experience of the M.A. program. These were included in the updated program brochure and will be used on the website.

9. Improving completion rates in the 12-month option

9.1 Implementing program changes

As of the 2015-2016 academic year, the M.A. in French and Francophone Studies will move from a 4.5cr degree to a 4.0cr degree.

9.2 Implementing stricter schedules for completion

No students are currently enrolled in the one-year option, however the Supervisor of Graduate Studies created schedules for all options outlining the respective deadlines and milestones (attached). These documents were circulated to all graduate students in the Winter 2015 term.