ELI Progress Report: Mid-Cycle Review
presented to Senate Undergraduate Council by
Renison University College

The self-study for the English Language Institute (ELI) was submitted on July 20, 2010. A site visit took place in October, and the review team submitted its report on December 8, 2010. The ELI presented a written response to the recommendations on March 1, 2011. In following up, the ELI has now developed a strategic plan that addresses all the key components of the Program Review. Recent developments, such as the release of the Report of the Task Force on Support for English Language Competency Development at the University, have also suggested new directions for the ELI. The following represent, point by point, what activities have been undertaken to address the recommendations made a little over two years ago. The most significant change has been the division of the English Language Institute into two complementary units: the English Language Centre (for non-credit activity and pre-university activity) and English Language Studies (for credit activity and post-university activity). Each of these units now has its own full-time director.

ELI Response to Specific Program Recommendations

1. Develop an overall strategic plan for expanded role at the university
   a. Re-craft Mission statement to correspond strategically to the mission of Waterloo

   The following revision of our mission statement is proposed, with elements more clearly linking our programs to the University of Waterloo in bold.

   **Mission statement**
   
   To help our students use English more proficiently, we are committed to developing curriculum informed by current research and delivering meaningful instruction in a supportive environment.

   The English Language Institute strives to...

   - provide student-centered classes led by dedicated, professionally trained and certified instructors
   - encourage students to collaborate with others inside and outside the classroom to increase their socio-linguistic flexibility
   - keep classes small with tasks and activities ranging from controlled to free practice to meet the collective and individual needs of students
   - assist the University of Waterloo in meeting its internationalization goals

   In the English Language Centre, we...

   - provide ESL instruction that allows students to meet their academic and professional goals
organize course materials in clearly defined levels, allowing students to measure their progress against recognized standards

provide English language training that allows students to meet the University of Waterloo's established standards of admission

In English Language Studies, we...

A. provide uWaterloo students with ESL instruction that...
   - helps students meet their English language needs in their fields of study

B. deliver the Applied Language Studies program that...
   - provides instruction in the field of second language acquisition reflecting current research in the field
   - provides opportunities for students to apply theory to practice

C. deliver ESL teacher training programs that...
   - provide professionally certified ESL teacher training
   - create professional development opportunities for language teaching professionals both on and off campus to promote best teaching practices through active research

b. Review Budget arrangements between ELI and Renison

As is true for all programs at Renison University College, the English Language Institute budget is part of the College's general budget. Income and expenses are reviewed regularly by the Principal, ELI Directors, and the Director of Finance to ensure that the ELI can deliver its programs professionally and that salaries and wages are competitive.

c. Affiliating credit courses with SSO, Affiliating APPLs courses with Faculty of Arts, moving ACE TESOL into revenue-generating stream of ELI

At the time the self-study was written (2010), the Student Success Office (SSO) had just been initiated and its role was evolving. Since then, the SSO has clarified its role within the university. While the SSO provides essential services to all uWaterloo students, it does not focus on the needs of second language learners. Also, there are no direct links from the SSO to academic departments within the university. Because ESL credit courses are academic and therefore need an academic home, Renison expects to keep ESL credit courses within the English Language Institute at Renison.

Affiliating the APPLs minor within the Faculty of Arts is dependent upon resources. To move from minor to major status, the program needs tenured and tenure-track faculty to teach the increased number of courses that a major would require. While this has not seemed possible in the past, a recent meeting with the Dean of Arts and language department chairs indicates that there is an interest in creating a graduate program in language studies. If this is the case, then building an undergraduate major to stream students into graduate studies might be a possibility. ACE-TESOL is a revenue-generating program. This program has recently received accreditation
from TESL Ontario, which opens the door to expanding the program. An ACE-TESOL manager has been hired and the program runs within English Language Studies.

2. **Consolidate and validate curricula and assessments in relation to academic genres**

   a. **Expand Curriculum review across non-credit and credit ESL courses and address strategically and expansively the ELI’s role with Waterloo**

      A comprehensive curriculum review for both the credit and non-credit courses was completed by December 2012. The English Language Centre has proposed an English language program (BASE) that will allow ESL uWaterloo applicants with grades sufficient for admission but without the required English language proficiency to be offered admission into select programs. This program is being developed in collaboration with uWaterloo’s Registrar’s Office and Undergraduate Marketing and Recruitment. It is evidence of the ELI’s working strategically within uWaterloo to help the university achieve its internationalization goals.

   b. **Itemize central outcomes for each course, clarify how activities in the course align directly with these expected outcomes and demonstrate how the assessments confirm that student have achieved the outcome intended**

      Between January 2012 and July 2012, the curriculum review, conducted by Advance Consulting for Education, Inc., enabled the English Language Centre to develop a standard format and standard content requirements, ensure coherence of curriculum documents and assessments, map courses against the Common European Framework (CEF), validate transition between levels, ensure that assessment tools are valid, reliable, and practical, and map final results of the 300 and 400 level against IELTS and TOEFL. This was a major undertaking that established a solid foundation from which future curriculum reviews can take place on a 3-5 year cycle.

      By December 2012, the ESL credit course curriculum review was complete. This review recognized the quality of the current courses and made recommendations related to aligning course titles with course content, assessing student skills, and standardizing course materials. The review recommendations were shared with all instructors in December, and steps have been taken to implement the recommendations. Renison’s Academic Council approved the revised descriptions in December.

   c. **Clarify, develop, and validate the functions and validity of assessments within and across ELI courses**

      The EFAS placement test in use at the time of the self-study has since been replaced with a combined proprietary written task and the Oxford Online Placement test (OOPT). The OOPT places students according to the CEF, which has been mapped onto the curriculum. The written task is used to verify levels or move students at the upper end of a range up or down a level according to writing ability. As part of the curriculum review, the assessment tools in EFAS were analysed to ensure validity, reliability and practicality.

   d. **Track and follow-up with graduates of ELI programs to identify how and why ESL instruction has helped students and find out where additional ESL courses are needed**

      Tracking EFAS students can be problematic as they don’t always have a Waterloo ID number
while enrolled in EFAS The ELC is investigating whether it will be possible to assign all students ID numbers for increased accountability. The students with Waterloo ID numbers are tracked and are academically successful for the most part. The ELC has been working closely with the Faculty of Science to provide programming to help 2+2 students adjust to life at Waterloo. A recent meeting with Dr. Shoufa Lin, Associate Dean, International Programs, highlights the need for increased attention to language and academic integrity issues during the 2+2 summer programs and afterwards. Discussions with IAP are taking place to implement a means of tracking BASE students, when the programs go live this September.

Tracking of students in the International Optometric Bridging Program (collaboratively offered by the School of Optometry and English Language Studies) is done through the School of Optometry. Ninety five percent of students taking ESL credit courses designed to meet the English Language Proficiency Exam milestone achieve this goal. A means of tracking students in other English Language Studies programs is being developed.

e. Ensure tasks and activities in ESL courses focus primarily on genres of academic English that students need to perform in their academic courses

Both the EFAS program and the ESL credit courses have an academic focus and thus have academic tasks and activities. The EFS and special programs do not have an association with uWaterloo admissions and so do not have the same breadth of academic content. See attached table for examples of tasks.

f. Expand content-based ESL courses in collaboration with departments or faculties across Waterloo

The development of an ESL for Economics course was a move to provide language and content instruction collaboratively to support the academic goals of ESL uWaterloo students. The offering of this course was supported by a LIF grant from CTE. English Language Studies also provides enhanced English language training for foreign-trained optometrists through the International Optometric Bridging Program. For this type of instruction to expand to multiple faculties, a financially viable model needs to be developed, a goal that supports the vision outlined in the Report of the Task Force on Support for English Language Competency Development at the University of Waterloo. The pilot project for BASE will be used as a means of assessing and determining future development.

g. Development and review of curriculum should be informed by expertise and include participation of all instructional staff

The review of the EFAS curriculum was conducted by Advance Consulting for Education, INC with the full participation of all the full-time staff language instructors. Sessional instructors also participated in the process by providing resources and piloting week-by-week plans. Review of the ESL credit course curriculum was discussed at the staff meeting in December 2012, followed by section meetings. Section leaders reported to the Director about how the review recommendations would be adopted in the winter 2013 term.

h. Establish cyclical development and review process of curricula

Now that a comprehensive curriculum review major overall has been completed, both divisions of the ELI can establish a 5-year cycle for curriculum review.

i. Undertake curriculum revisions within overarching ELI strategic plan
The Directors of the ELC and ELS have created a strategic plan for the ELI, which has been distributed to full-time instructors for input. It will be distributed to the Renison community (Winter 2013) and will be shared with the uWaterloo community (Spring 2013).

j. Expand APPLS program
Expansion of the APPLS minor to a major may now be possible as a recent meeting with the Dean of Arts and language department chairs indicates that there is an interest in creating a graduate program in language studies. If this is the case, then building an undergraduate major to stream students into graduate studies might be a possibility.

3. Expand and regularize personnel
   i. Hire a dedicated Director
      In March 2012, the ELI was restructured into English Language Studies (ELS) and English Language Centre (ELC). Each of these areas now has its own dedicated Director.
   ii. Restructure task assignments and positions
      In November 2012, the Directors provided the Renison Principal and the Board of Governors with a 5-year plan for strategic growth that includes required staffing and space needs.
   iii. Hire a marketing and student recruitment/orientation staff person
      In October 2012, the ELS and ELC hired a full-time marketing/recruitment staff person.
   iv. Regularize appointments and salaries for instructors on long-term teaching appointments
      In Spring 2011, job descriptions were rewritten and sent to Human Resources at uWaterloo. By Spring 2012, the job descriptions were re-graded and approved.
      In Spring 2012, ESL credit course hours were regularized at 4.5 hours/week, and lecturer contracts were similarly standardized.
   v. Require instructors to have a minimum standard of a Master’s degree in relevant discipline
      Having a Master’s degree is now a requirement for newly hired full-time instructors. For the ELC, it is preferred that sessional instructors have a Master’s degree, but not required. Experience has confirmed that the best instructors are not always those with a Master’s degree.

A graduate degree in a related field has always been required of ESL credit instructors. This practice will not change.

4. Utilize facilities and resources strategically
   a. Maximize classroom use and investigate availability of small classrooms across the full university campus
      Classes run in 4-5 hour blocks when they can no longer be scheduled in the current manner. In the summer, a few classes are held on main campus, with hopes of extending the practice on the Waterloo campus throughout the year. In preparation for including EFAS courses on the schedule of classes, the 300-level and 400-level courses are seeking Senate approval for inclusion in the University calendar.
   b. Investigate need and use of language lab
      The language lab space on main campus is also destined for change as indicated in a recent meeting of the Dean of Arts and language department chairs. Language
departments point out that, with new technology, the need for a traditional language lab has all but been eliminated. The ELI program review team also questioned whether the REN language lab optimized the use of space. The EFAS program now incorporates lab time into 1.5 hours of weekly classes. Any decision about the use of the REN lab (a decision to be made by Renison’s Principal) should take into consideration curriculum requirements as well as what is happening with the uWaterloo labs.

c. Increase library holdings for ESL practice materials, and

d. Increase and encourage use of library holdings for APPLS programs as well as for professional development of ESL instructors

ELI’s relationship with Renison’s Lusi Wong Library is strong, and the librarian encourages ELI teachers to request resources. However, there is reluctance to stock practice materials (such as workbooks) as suggested in the review because students tend to write in this type of material, resulting in damaged books, an expense the library has not budgeted for.

The Renison library supports the ESL credit, APPLS, and ACE-TESOL programs by purchasing books and materials as requested. To build richer and more extensive collections in these areas, a more consistent effort will be made to recommend books for purchase.

e. Add a budget line for ongoing updating and expansion of the instructional resource library for the ELI

This expense was added to the 2012 budget line.

f. Increase space for instructors and put names on their doors

In January 2012, Renison designated an ELC instructors’ room with space for eight sessional instructors. Additional office space is being sought for full-time instructors as well as for sessional instructors in short-term programs. Door plates were requested in April 2012.

Summary

The English Language Institute has made significant strides in meeting the recommendations of the 2010 Program Review Report. Most notably, it has been divided into two units - the English Language Centre and English Language Studies – that clearly define their areas of activity. Both units have completed curriculum reviews and have begun to implement the resulting recommendations. Salaries for instructors and staff members have been increased to make the positions competitive with similar positions across Ontario and Canada. A strategic plan has been developed to be shared with the Renison community, and a marketing specialist has been hired. The mission statement has been revised to emphasize links to the University’s strategic goals, and the BASE program has been designed to enhance its ability to attract top international students.

The English Language Institute is well positioned to support the University of Waterloo in its efforts to meet the vision outlined in the Report of the Task Force on Support for English Language Competency Development. Further, it is committed to working with the university to improve its ability to track student progress and optimize its use of facilities and resources to help achieve the goals of the
university into the next decade.