

# Final Assessment Report of Applied Language Studies Program (Minor and Diploma) January 2015

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## **Introduction**

The Applied Language Studies program is one of only a handful of such programs across Canada, especially at the undergraduate level. Offered through the English Language Institute in Renison University College, the program's curriculum consists of eight courses that are related to second language acquisition, methodology, identity, and assessment, and requires that students demonstrate a commitment to being second language learners.

Prior to 2012, the program as an Option (for degree students) or Diploma (for non-degree students) consisted of 10 courses. In 2012, the Option was converted to an eight-course Minor. The current requirements for both the Minor and Diploma are identical. The APPLS plan consists of three APPLS core courses, four language courses in a student's second language, and a single course from a list of courses on education-related topics. Once the most recent changes to the APPLS program take effect in September 2015, the APPLS plan will consist of four core courses, and four language courses in a student's second language from any language department on campus.

In accordance with uWaterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a summary and synthesis of (i) the external review of the Applied Language Studies (APPLS) program at Renison University College, (ii) the program response to the site visit team's review, and (iii) an implementation plan for improvements that lists specific actions, timelines, required resources and responsibility.

## **Previous Program Review**

The APPLS program was last reviewed in 2010 as part of the review of the English Language Institute (ELI). At the time, the program consisted of 10 courses and was recognized as an Option for degree students and as a Diploma for people who were not University of Waterloo students enrolled in other plans. The 2010 review focused primarily on the ELI's English language programs. With reference to the APPLS program, the recommendation was made to transform the Minor to a Major. This recommendation was not followed up by Renison due to the very significant resource requirements, namely tenured and tenure-track faculty to teach the increased number of courses that a major would require. A second recommendation was to complete a detailed review of all Applied Language Studies (and English Language Studies) courses. The review confirmed that APPLS courses are all very strong and focused. Although

there were suggested changes for individual courses, there were no overall recommendations for changing the set of APPLS courses.

## **Self-Study Process and Site Visit**

Preparation the self-study report was a cooperative effort amongst APPLS faculty and instructors, current students and alumni, and was completed under the direction of the APPLS Coordinator. In fall 2013, current APPLS students responded to an in-class survey. In the winter of 2014, both APPLS students and alumni responded to an online survey. With the assistance of the Centre for Teaching Excellence at the University of Waterloo, in the spring of 2014 a workshop was held for APPLS faculty and instructors to review the mapping of the APPLS course objectives to the Universities Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLES).

The APPLS program submitted its self-study to office of the Associate Vice President, Academic on July 21, 2014. In addition to CVs of key academic and administrative personnel connected to the program (volume II of the submission), a comprehensive set of appendices accompanied the report, containing information on: APPLS Steering Committee membership, course details (lists, descriptions, outlines, etc.), APPLS assignments meeting the Global Experience Certificate's requirements, student profiles, the 2010 review of the English Language Institute and the 2013 mid-cycle response, APPLS program level outcomes mapped to core courses, survey information and letters of support.

The site visit was conducted November 3, 2014. The members of review team were both "internal" - Prof. Laura Gray (Department of Music, Conrad Grebel University College) and Prof. François Paré (Department of French Studies, University of Waterloo). The review team met with the Principal and Dean of Renison University College, Renison's Lusi Wong librarian, uWaterloo's Associate Vice President, Academic, and the coordinator, an instructor, ten current students and three recent graduates of the APPLS program.

The reviewers' report was received on December 4, 2014 and the program's response and implementation strategy, with timelines, responsibilities and resource needs assessment as well as the approval by the Dean at Renison University College was received on March 9, 2015.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, verbatim in many cases, from the self-study, the reviewers' report and the program response.

## **Strengths and Challenges**

### **Strengths**

- The APPLS program contributes to collaborative activity across the Faculty of Arts, involving a broad range of departments, as well as to Waterloo's focus on global prominence and internationalization.
- APPLS courses are taken by students enrolled in a wide variety of academic programs, contributing to a vibrant student experience.

- Survey results show clearly that the program is meeting its goals. Of those respondents who indicated a profession, many were currently working as French teachers, French immersion teachers, English Second Language teachers, or in teaching. 90% of respondents indicated the APPLS courses had influenced or will influence their choice of profession, their future studies and/or how they learned a second language.
- Enthusiastic, engaged and competent instructors involved in the program.

### **Challenges**

- The APPLS program is largely supported by a very small number of well-qualified people - one full professor and two instructors.
- There is no dedicated administrative staff position affiliated with the APPLS program.
- Due to scheduling problems, some students find it difficult to complete the eight-course Minor.

### **Reviewers' Report**

The overall impression of the APPLS program was notably positive and encouraging, with the reviewers indicating that “the program presents innovative features in a fast-developing field...” With respect to the evolution of the APPLS program, the reviewers remarked that “Although the current APPLS Minor continues to refer largely to the teaching of English as Second Language in terms of course content and practicum within ELI, some of the more recent courses tend to cover a much wider range of cultural and linguistic situations. More generally, APPLS offers students a relatively coherent introductory program to issues in second language acquisition, applied language pedagogy, cultural sensitivity, and identity theory.” The APPLS programs goals were judged to be “consistent with the University’s and Arts’ strategic plans, as well as Renison University College’s current mission document...”. The curriculum structure is sound and course objectives were seen to meet the requirements of the Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations. Methods of student assessments in courses were judged to be appropriate. Financial, space and library resources are sufficient to sustain the program in its current form.

The reviewers were impressed with the variety of students in the APPLS program, and both current and former students were unanimous in their praise for the program.

Although the reviewers viewed the APPLS program positively, they indicated that the APPLS program “does not fully reflect the thriving, innovative fields of Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism Studies. It should be emphasized that, given additional resources, a greater focus on current research in the field, and increased collaboration with the language departments, this small Minor/Diploma has the potential to offer a very original contribution not only to the study of multilingualism and language acquisition in a global context, but also to the development of courses in cutting-edge areas, such as computer-assisted language learning and virtual language worlds.”

The reviewers made a series of six recommendations for improvement of the APPLS program. These recommendations and the program responses follow below.

**Recommendation 1:**

The Reviewers recommend that the APPLS program define a clear discrete identity from the ESL program. Although, in its current acceptance, the program greatly benefits from its close association with ELI teaching activities, it is too often seen in a supporting role. The reviewers believe that APPLS has the potential to further develop into a distinct “brand”, focusing on the links between second-language acquisition, multilingualism and the global economy.

**Response:**

Renison appreciates the Reviewers’ confidence that the APPLS program has the ability to develop into a distinct ‘brand’ with an independent reputation. APPLS maintains a stable connection to Germanic and Slavic Studies through the teaching of Dr. Barbara Schmenk, who teaches one of the APPLS core courses. We hope to strengthen this connection and build similar links to other language departments and units (e.g. Global Experience Certificate) on campus.

It is important to note that the APPLS program’s association with the English Language Institute (ELI) has been essential in offering experiential education opportunities for APPLS students. For example, APPLS students benefit from their interactions with ELI students in conversation and email partner activities, and from their observation of ELI instructors who welcome APPLS students as observers in their classrooms. In the recent past, APPLS students have also observed professors in French and Russian Studies, and we hope to build on these relationships in the future.

**Action:** In February 2015, the APPLS Coordinator collaborated with French Studies and Social Development Studies to promote the APPLS Minor during the ARTS Choose Your Major Event. This collaboration will continue in the future. The APPLS Coordinator will continue to work with the language departments to find classroom observation placements for APPLS students. Other opportunities for collaboration will be explored as they arise.

**Responsible:** The APPLS Coordinator.

**Resources:** No additional resources required.

**Timelines:** Already in process and continuing.

**Recommendation 2:**

The reviewers recommend that students gain earlier enrolment in the program to ensure an adequate timeline for completion of the requirements. This may be achieved through marketing the course more deliberately in 100-level courses.

**Response:**

We plan to promote the APPLS program more systematically to students in first year language programs and relevant disciplines. This will be done through improved communication with undergraduate advisors. In addition, Renison plans to create a comprehensive on-campus recruiting strategy for several of its programs, APPLS amongst them. It is hoped that with additional marketing resources, APPLS will be featured more prominently to students in their

first two years of study. This will allow more students to learn about the APPLS minor before it is too late for them to complete the required courses for the minor.

**Action:** Undergraduate Advisors will be contacted during the advising period prior to fall and winter terms (when APPLS core courses are offered). They will be sent copies of the APPLS promotional brochure. Also, an enhanced Renison marketing unit will be in place in the 2015-2016 academic year. This unit will develop an on-campus recruiting strategy for APPLS to be implemented the following year.

**Responsibility:** The APPLS Coordinator will work with Undergraduate Advisors. Renison marketing unit will develop on-campus recruiting strategy.

**Resources:** Renison has committed to strengthening its marketing unit.

**Timelines:** Work with Undergraduate Advisors will begin during the advising period for fall 2015. The on-campus recruiting plan will be implemented in 2016.

### **Recommendation 3:**

The Reviewers recommend that the APPLS program be promoted in a more systematic way. Recruitment and program promotion are mostly concentrated internally, focusing mainly on students already in an APPLS course. Most students first hear about APPLS in a language course but there are students in other programs (particularly Psychology) and other Faculties who are pursuing the Minor. Ensuring that the program is well promoted at uWaterloo should raise the profile of the program and make the program available to students from any discipline. The beautiful brochure, recently developed by the College, is a first step in that direction.

### **Response:**

At the moment, most APPLS students come to the program through word of mouth. While we are pleased that students in the courses enthusiastically recommend the program to their friends, a more systematic approach to marketing would enhance the profile of the program and increase enrolment. As the Reviewers noted, Renison has recently committed resources to the development of a promotional brochure. As well, the APPLS minor was represented in two sessions in the "Declare Your Major" week in ARTS in the winter 2015 term. The APPLS Coordinator shared information sessions with the undergraduate advisors in both French Studies and Social Development Studies. It is hoped that these sessions will continue to attract students to the program.

As Renison builds its marketing team, we know that the APPLS program will be more prominently featured in comprehensive on-campus recruiting efforts.

**Action:** An enhanced Renison marketing unit will be in place in the 2015-2016 academic year. This unit will develop an on-campus recruiting strategy for APPLS to be implemented the following year.

**Responsibility:** Renison marketing unit.

**Resources:** Renison has committed to strengthening its marketing unit.

**Timelines:** The on-campus recruiting plan will be implemented in 2016.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

The Reviewers recommend that the Renison administration and the APPLS Co-ordinator review staffing needs for the APPLS program and consider establishing a dedicated part-time position to handle administrative tasks.

#### **Response:**

Renison has committed resources to create an administrative assistant position to support the APPLS plan beginning in the spring of 2015. Thank you to the reviewers for making this very necessary support explicit.

**Action:** Hire an administrative assistant to support the APPLS program.

**Responsibility:** APPLS Coordinator in conjunction with Renison's Director of Human Resources.

**Resources:** Renison has included the cost of this position in its budget.

**Timeline:** An administrative assistant will be hired by July 2015.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

The reviewers recommend that the APPLS program connect more systematically with existing Renison language programs and other Renison programs (e.g., Social Work, Social Development Studies) and collaborate more closely with other uWaterloo departments, especially Germanic and Slavic Studies, French and Spanish.

#### **Response:**

This is a very useful recommendation. As noted above, APPLS has a stable connection with Germanic and Slavic Studies, and we seek to strengthen this connection and similar links to French Studies, Spanish and Latin American Studies, as well as Arabic (Studies in Islam), Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language departments. By participating in the 2015 'Declare Your Major' initiative in the Faculty of Arts, APPLS has begun the task of working more closely with French Studies and Social Development Studies. We will continue to search for ways in which programs with similar interests (e.g. the French Teaching Specialization Stream and the Global Experience Certificate) can be aligned with our program goals.

**Action:** In February 2015, the APPLS Coordinator collaborated with French Studies and Social Development Studies to promote the APPLS Minor during the ARTS Choose Your Major Event. This collaboration will continue in the future. The APPLS Coordinator will continue to work with the language departments to find classroom observation placements for APPLS students. Other opportunities for collaboration will be explored as they arise.

**Responsibility:** APPLS Coordinator

**Resources:** No additional resources required.

**Timelines:** Already in process and continuing.

### **Recommendation 6:**

The reviewers recommend that the APPLS Co-ordinator continue to discuss a Major program with Renison administration, Faculty of Arts administration, and Language departments (especially Germanic and Slavic Studies, French and Spanish). Under the existing funding formula, it is unlikely that the College would be able to resource the program. More tenured and tenure-track faculty would be needed for the increased teaching and administrative load. There are two factors to consider that might make the Major more viable: 1) the reduction of Arts Honours BA requirements to a 16-course minimum and the interdisciplinary nature of APPLS may make the degree more achievable; 2) if the BIUs for Honours APPLS majors could be transferred to Renison, it would make the program more cost-effective.

#### **Response:**

The possibility of creating a major in APPLS is an appealing one. Securing adequate funding for a major will be foundational to its realization. The current funding formula which folds the APPLS program into the Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) agreement constrains the College's ability to expand the program further. As the Reviewers note, it may be possible to find innovative ways to grow the plan through interdisciplinary collaboration. Renison will continue to look for opportunities to grow the program in the future.

**Action:** Revisit the possibility of creating a major in APPLS in two years.

**Responsibility:** APPLS Coordinator and Renison's Administrative team.

**Resources:** None required (other than time).

**Timeline:** Spring term 2017

The program response further notes that many of the reviewers' recommendations (1, 2, 3, and 5) relate to more systematic promotion of the program through marketing and relationship building. This work is anticipated to be accomplished in conjunction with Renison's planned new marketing team. This new unit will promote APPLS more broadly and consistently, increasing awareness of the program in both student and instructor populations. The addition of an administrative support position within the APPLS unit will free up the Coordinator's time to strengthen relationships across departments and seek opportunities for collaboration that might allow the program to grow.