

Final Assessment Report

English Language Studies

November 2019

Executive Summary

External reviewers were satisfied with the programs in English Language Studies, including the Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers, delivered by the Department of Cultural and Language Studies at Renison University College.

“The Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers (EMLS) and related EMLS credit courses offered through English Language Studies (ELS) at Renison University College appear to be in good standing. Students, both undergraduate and graduate, consistently expressed appreciation for the dedication and enthusiasm of the ELS teaching team in providing engaging in-class sessions and detailed feedback both in and outside of the EMLS courses.”

A total of 4 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, pertaining to reviewing workload of teaching staff, fostering research expertise, and marketing the EMLS program across campus. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2024-2025.

Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the programs in English Language Studies, including the Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers, delivered by the Department of Culture and Language Studies. A self-study (Volumes I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs on August 11, 2017. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). Appended to Volume I were the course outlines for all courses in the program. The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm's-length reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs: Dr. Carol Acton, Professor of English Language and Literature, and Dr. Carolyn MacGregor, Professor of Systems Design Engineering.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit on March 13, 2018. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Academic; President and Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Dean of Renison University College; Acting Chair of the Department of Culture and Language Studies; Director of English Language Studies, as well as a number of faculty and staff. The reviewers also had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the library, and current undergraduate and graduate students.

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

Program characteristics

English Language Studies (ELS) offers English for Multilingual Speakers (EMLS) credit courses and certificates at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Undergraduate Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers is intended for undergraduate students whose first language is not English to demonstrate their commitment to mastering English communication skills. Requirements include three EMLS courses (1.5 credits) and a cumulative average of 70%. Likewise, the Graduate Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers is intended for graduate students whose first language is not English to demonstrate their commitment to mastering English communication skills. Requirements include three EMLS courses (1.5 units) and a cumulative average of 60%.

EMLS courses are open to University of Waterloo (UW) students, from all faculties, who self-identify as English language learners. EMLS courses are English language communication skills courses.

At the undergraduate level, EMLS courses are embedded within several University of Waterloo programs and initiatives. These are the most notable:

- The Math Faculty's Communication Skills Initiative requires all undergraduate Math students to complete two communication skills courses within the first two years of study. Math students whose first language is not English may choose to take EMLS courses to satisfy this requirement.
- EMLS participation in the Arts First program

At the graduate level, EMLS courses are frequently used to support the English language communication skills of students whose English language proficiency scores (from, for example, the Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL] or the International English Language Testing System [IELTS] exams) are slightly below admission standards as determined by their admitting departments.

Summary of strengths, challenges and weaknesses based on self-study

Strengths

- The strength of the ELS unit lies in its teaching. In the 2016-2017 academic year, instructors in ELS taught 1,744 students in 84 sections, and teaching evaluations are strong. Survey data indicate students clearly see the relevance of their EMLS courses to their other academic courses. In this way, ELS fulfills its mission to support undergraduate and graduate students who use English as a second or additional language to succeed in their academic work.
- ELS is embedded in the University of Waterloo context with many connections at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. ELS is a significant participant in many university-wide initiatives. Further, ELS instructors are active participants at the college, university, local, provincial, national, and international levels of their profession.

Challenges

- As ELS delivers courses, and not a full program, recognition of the courses is not as broad as we might like. Some people are aware of EMLS undergraduate courses, but not graduate ones. Growing awareness of the EMLS courses and the impact the courses can have on student learning outcomes will ensure admissions staff and faculty keep them in mind as they admit and advise EMLS students.
- A further challenge relates to the high fluctuation in enrolment over the three terms of the academic year. Consistently low spring term enrolment means that ELS will remain dependent on sessional instruction during high-enrolment fall and winter terms.
- While ELS has had solid representation within the Undergraduate Communication Outcomes Initiative (UCOI) and the Steering Committee, English Language Competency Initiative (SCELCI), Engineering, Science and Applied Health Sciences faculties have opted to develop communication skills courses without seeking ELS input.
- Continuing Lecturers (CLs) in ELS teach eight courses per year and carry a 20 percent service requirement. ELS would like to gather more information about comparable

teaching loads for CLs on main campus. If there is a discrepancy, ELS would like to explore the possibility of moving to commensurate workloads.

Weaknesses

- ELS should work more closely with admitting units from all faculties so enrolment highs do not come as a surprise. For example, some programs admit more students than expected or make offers to more students with EMLS program conditions than expected. This causes the ELS to scramble to accommodate students seeking communication skills courses that term. Greater communication with admissions early in the course scheduling cycle would likely be helpful to prevent the surprise factor in terms when enrolment exceeds expectations.

Summary of key findings from the external reviewers

The Certificate in English for Multilingual Speakers (EMLS) and related EMLS credit courses offered through English Language Studies (ELS) at Renison University College appear to be in good standing. Those interviewed, from senior administrators to students, praised the Director for fostering opportunities to contribute to the growth and direction of the ELS offerings to UW. A common theme from the interviews is that instructors and support staff are committed to delivering a quality program – often at their own personal expense. Students, both undergraduate and graduate, consistently expressed appreciation for the dedication and enthusiasm of the ELS teaching team in providing engaging in-class sessions and detailed feedback both within and outside of the ELMS courses.

Program response to external reviewers' recommendations

Recommendations

1. Immediate review of workload, task weighting, and compensation for teaching staff and the Director to ensure equity and parity for the ELS teaching team when compared to similar staff positions at the University of Waterloo, with considerations to include:
 - a. Provide further teaching relief for the Director so that more time can be devoted to administrative service tasks focused on increasing the health and stability of the ELS program and faculty. The costs of additional teaching relief can likely be offset by the increased service provided by ELS to the wider UW community.
 - b. Recognize actual week-to-week workload of teaching staff driven by pedagogical best practices for multilingual language acquisition, while appreciating that course capacity may be an inadequate indicator of week-to-week workload. The risk of “grading burnout” of dedicated faculty seems high due to the lack of downtime for instructors within a week, a term, or between terms – especially for full-time faculty.

- c. Offer fair benefits and in-kind support for long-term contract faculty. With the current limitations in projecting EMLS course enrollment, ELS relies on the flexibility of contract instructors. Retaining access to high-quality contract instructors is key to consistent program delivery. Contract instructors, like full-time faculty, need access to private space for course preparation, and meeting with students. Contract instructors who feel undervalued are likely to look for positions elsewhere, taking their gained expertise with them. While a pro-rated benefit package may or may not be possible, at minimum reasonable compensations should be made when contract instructors must use their own home resources for grading and teaching related activities. UW full-time faculty are allowed reasonable expense related to teaching through annual professional allowance (FPER).
- d. Financial and time-supported opportunities for interested faculty to do program, curriculum, and professional development that would otherwise be at the expense of faculty personal resources, vacation time, and/or personal health. Supported opportunities to add balance and rejuvenation in one's professional life can help offset burnout. In addition to reasonable FPER, an ELS discretionary fund to help supplement attendance at primary ELMS-related conferences could be used for both full-time and contract instructors.
- e. Reconsider task weightings to acknowledge research and scholarship undertaken by Director and teaching team members to contribute to ELS pedagogical research and best practice materials to be shared with the wider ELS community. There are known examples in other UW units of continuing lecturers who have their research and scholarship contributions recognized as part of task weightings.

Response

ELS appreciates the reviewers' recognition of the workload demands of the ELS Director, Continuing Lecturers, and Definite-Term Lecturers (referred to as teaching staff). The reviewers have broad knowledge of comparable positions and workload demands across the University, and they have offered useful ways to begin investigating issues of equity and parity.

All workload-related issues are being addressed through the negotiation of the first Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between Renison administration and the new Renison Association of Academic Staff (RAAS). RAAS executive members and negotiators, as well as the Renison administrative team, are aware of the reviewers' recommendations. The negotiations are ongoing, and we hope the MoA will be implemented by spring 2020.

We hope the MoA will address the workload issues identified by the reviewers, specifically that the Director will receive further teaching workload relief; and CLs and DTLs will see an annual one-course reduction (from eight to seven) and provisions for non-teaching terms.

2. Foster ELS research expertise by allowing at least some of the current ELS team to allocate 10% of their time to ELS research and scholarship through potential “living lab” opportunities involving participation of current students and alumni to continue to build and share best practices for ELS support – both inside and outside of the classroom. Given the rarity of credit-based EMLS courses offered at North American universities and the expertise among the ELS teaching team, there is rich opportunity for ELS to promote Renison and UW through its research contributions.

Response

The possibility of CLs and DTLs officially allocating 10% of their workload to research activities is also under consideration in the negotiation process between Renison’s administrative team and RAAS. We anticipate that the Memorandum of Agreement will be implemented by spring 2020.

3. Strategically position marketing to raise awareness of the EMLS program and its success stories (teaching term, undergraduate and graduate students).

Response

ELS and APPLS units currently have a part-time marketing assistant who creates website and social media content, writes promotional materials for the *Renison This Month* electronic newsletter (and occasionally for the *Daily Bulletin*), represents the units at college and university open house events, and designs and distributes marketing materials related to unit initiatives. We hope to increase the impact of the assistant’s efforts by integrating her more fully into Renison’s larger Marketing department, which, in the past, has been largely focused on Renison’s other programs. As Renison’s Marketing department is open to this possibility, this is a good opportunity to encourage greater integration to extend ELS’s marketing efforts.

4. Encourage broader collegial support across campus for both EMLS teaching staff and new tenure-track hire to better leverage ELMS teaching expertise.

Response

The implementation of this recommendation requires a multi-pronged approach involving a variety of people.

- The Chair of Culture and Language Studies will continue to represent English Language Studies on the university-level Steering Committee for English Language Competency Initiatives (and hopefully on any official body that may replace it);
- The Director of English Language Studies will continue to represent English Language Studies on the ARTS First Steering Committee;

- The Renison Dean and the Chair of Culture and Language Studies will engage with the Deans and Associate Deans of the faculties of Engineering, Science, Applied Health Sciences, and Environment to encourage them to consider including EMLS versions of communication skills courses in their communication skills initiatives. If successful, English language learners in these faculties will have a choice to study in courses that explicitly address English language issues in tandem with communication skills development as they do within the Math and Arts First communication skills initiatives;
- The Director and other CLs of English Language Studies will continue to work collaboratively with both the CTE and the Writing and Communications Centre by participating in the Undergraduate Communication Outcome Initiatives (UCOI) Community of Practice Meetings.

We hope these efforts will disseminate knowledge more broadly about how English Language Studies may contribute to English language communication skills initiatives across campus.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Immediate review of workload, task weighting, and compensation for teaching staff and the Director to ensure equity and parity for the ELS teaching team when compared to similar at the University of Waterloo.	Workload issues are currently under negotiation as the RAAS and Renison negotiation teams develop a new MoA.	RAAS and Renison negotiating teams.	Possibly spring 2020
2.	Foster ELS research expertise by allowing at least some of the current ELS team to allocate 10% of their time to ELS research and scholarship both inside and outside of the classroom.	The possibility of allocating 10% of CL/DTL workload to research is currently under negotiation as the RAAS and Renison negotiation teams develop a new MoA.	RAAS and Renison negotiating teams.	Possibly spring 2020
3.	Strategically position marketing to raise awareness of the EMLS program and its success stories.	Work more closely with Renison's college-wide Marketing department to raise awareness of the EMLS program in more systematic ways.	Director of ELS; Marketing Assistant to ELS (no additional resources required)	Starting fall 2018 and ongoing
4.	Encourage broader collegial support across campus for both EMLS teaching staff and new tenure-track hire to better leverage EMLS teaching expertise.	Work continuously to ensure strong representation on communication skills initiative planning committees.	Director of ELS; Research faculty in APPLS/EMLS	Representation on communication skills initiative planning committees is ongoing.

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.



Date of next program review

2024-2025

Date

Signatures of Approval

Chair/Director

Jan 10, 2019

Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only)

JAN 10 2019

Date

Faculty Dean

Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.

Dec 11, 2018

Associate Vice-President, Academic
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Date

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
(For graduate and augmented programs)

Date

Checklist for SUC/SGRC Reviewer Feedback Quality Assurance Office

Final Assessment Report: English Language Studies, November 2018

Name of Reviewer: Brendon Larson

Date: 12/16/2019

Does the Final Assessment Report:

1. Include a credible implementation plan that not only addresses the substantive issues identified from the program review process, but also clearly identifies:
 - The actions that will follow from specific recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations? **Yes** **No**
 - Those who will be responsible for providing resources? **Yes** **No**
 - Priorities for implementation and realistic timelines for initiating and monitoring actions? **Yes** **No**
2. Provide rationales for any recommendations that have not been pursued? **Yes** **No**

General Comments

The program has made several revisions to the document in response to reviewers' feedback. I now think that it is acceptable, though clearly some outcomes will depend on productive new RAAS - Renison MoA.

Requested Revisions

See tracked changes and comments in Word document.

Checklist for SUC/SGRC Reviewer Feedback

Quality Assurance Office

Final Assessment Report: English Language Studies

Name of Reviewer: Bruce MacVicar

Date: 11/4/2019

Does the Final Assessment Report:

1. Include a credible implementation plan that not only addresses the substantive issues identified from the program review process, but also clearly identifies:
 - The actions that will follow from specific recommendations? Yes No
 - Those who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations? Yes No
 - Those who will be responsible for providing resources? Yes No
 - Priorities for implementation and realistic timelines for initiating and monitoring actions? Yes No
2. Provide rationales for any recommendations that have not been pursued? Yes No

General Comments

Nov 4, 2019

Overall the report is positive and the response is good. I did find some vague wording in the program characteristics and it is not clear to me how the authors are using the word 'notable'. More definition, with estimates of numbers of students and impacts on resources and ability to hire full-time team members would be useful.

I also note that the 10% allocation time to foster ELS research is not addressed by adding a research faculty member because it doesn't encourage others to participate. Should address whether the recommendation will be followed or not, and what the resource implications would be if it were to be implemented.

Recommendation 4 has a list of activities, but does not address who is responsible for ensuring that they are completed.

Jan 20, 2020

I have had a chance to review it now and find that the comments and changes are all positive. I do not have any further comments.