

Final Assessment Report

Italian Studies (Minor)

December 2019

Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Italian Studies Minor delivered by the Department of Italian and French Studies at St. Jerome's University (SJU) was in good standing.

"The Review Team commends the colleagues at SJU for their efforts and determination to provide a quality program in the face of very challenging times. Students enjoy the courses [they] offer".

A total of two recommendations were provided by the reviewers. 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 2025-2026.

Number of Students Graduating with a Minor in Italian Studies

Degree Year	Total
2017	2
2016	3
2015	3

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 Italian Studies Minor delivered by the Department of Italian and French Studies at St. Jerome's University (SJU). A self-study (Volumes I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on August 30, 2018. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, including the data collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program 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: Dr. David Porreca, Associate Professor in the Department of Classical Studies, and Dr. Monica Leoni, Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit on January 23, 2019. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Academic; Dean of Arts; Acting Dean of St. Jerome's University; Chair of the Department of Italian and French Studies; faculty members and staff. The review team also had the opportunity to meet with a group of current students, tour the facilities, and meet with a representative from the SJU Library.

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

Minor in Italian Studies: Students enrolled in any degree program may pursue a minor designation in Italian Studies. This program offers students the possibility to study and understand the language and culture – including the art, music, and *dolce vita* – of one of the world's greatest contributors to knowledge. Literary texts may be studied either in the original Italian or in English. Graduates may capitalize on job opportunities in government agencies, school boards, as well as multinational companies in Italy.

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

Strengths

- The strength of Italian Studies continues to be teaching excellence. Student surveys revealed high levels of satisfaction, which were attributed primarily to the passion, dedication, and enthusiasm of their instructors.
- Enrolment in both beginner Italian language courses (30 to 40 per class) and Italian culture courses (50 to 70 per class) has remained strong. The new course offering, ITALST 265 (Mafia) drew 89 students in the Winter 2019 term.
- Over the years, class size in upper-level literature courses has typically been small, but nevertheless compares favourably to enrolment in similar courses at the University of Waterloo in other disciplines such as French and English; for example, ITALST 370 (Women Writers of the Italian Renaissance) had an enrolment of 16 when last taught in Winter 2015, ITALST 360 (Dante) had an enrolment of 19 in Fall 2015.

Challenges

- Student recruitment for the Italian Studies Minor has been the greatest challenge (there are no more than one or two candidates a year).

- There is also chronically low enrolment in the intermediate Italian language courses (ITAL 201 and 202).

Weaknesses

- One noticeable weakness of the Minor program in comparison to others across North America is that the completion of four language courses, or the equivalent of intermediate-level language competency, is not compulsory. Students are free to choose six courses from ITAL (language) **or** ITALST (culture) offerings. It is therefore possible to earn a minor in Italian Studies while having only a basic knowledge of the Italian language.

Summary of key findings from the external reviewers

The reviewers found that courses related to the minor in Italian Studies were enjoyed by students and they commended the instructors at SJU for being able to offer such a quality program under challenging circumstances, including the retirement of two key faculty members.

Program response to external reviewers' recommendations

Recommendations

1. Institutionally, if the program is indeed "Mission Critical" to SJU, it should receive proportional consideration and support. The Review Team feels that this support would be most directly demonstrated by the immediate replacement of at least one of the two retired Italian Studies full-time faculty members with at least one tenure-track position. The long-term survival of the program depends on this being made a top priority. Replacing both retired faculty members should be a longer-term goal.

Response

As one of St. Jerome's few unshared disciplines, Italian Studies represents unique possibilities for growth that the SJU administration recognizes and is committed to supporting.

- a) The SJU Interim Vice President Academic and Dean (VPAD) (previously the Acting Dean) authorized the hiring of a Lecturer for 2019-2020 who will teach seven courses. Additional courses will be offered by sessional instructors. This Lecturer was hired on a one-year contract, effective Sept 1, 2019-Aug. 31, 2020.
- b) The search has begun for a tenure-track position effective July 1, 2020, subject to budgetary approval. At SJU, the normal teaching load of full-time faculty members is five courses/year. Therefore, in the short term the program will continue to rely on sessional instructors to teach additional course offerings.
- c) The VPAD requested a five-year plan for growth from the Department. This plan was delivered in August 2019. The department has already taken measures to enrich our Italian Studies program. For example, in Spring 2020, in collaboration with the University of Guelph, students will have the opportunity to study in Sorrento, Italy.

2. The Department of [Italian and French] Studies should also consider offering some key culture courses online to attract larger numbers of students. The development of such courses requires, however, support from the administration in the form of a tenure-track faculty member who can manifest a longer-term commitment to the program and the institution.

Response

The VPAD has authorized the Chair to propose new online courses to be approved at SJU and at the University of Waterloo in the Winter 2020 term. These will be proposals for a series of online courses, including online versions of existing key courses, as well as one new culture course. Depending on the capacity of the Centre for Extended Learning (CEL) to accommodate these requests, one course will ideally be launched in 2021-2022, and another by 2023.

Recommendations that were not selected for implementation

The reviewers' report included a third recommendation, concerning parking facilities for instructors; however, it was based on a misunderstanding and later found not to be factually valid.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Institutionally, if the program is indeed “Mission Critical” to SJU, it should receive proportional consideration and support. The Review Team feels that this support would be most directly demonstrated by the immediate replacement of at least one of the two retired Italian Studies full-time faculty members with at least one tenure-track position. The long-term survival of the program depends on this being made a top priority. Replacing both retired faculty members should be a longer-term goal.	a) The SJU Interim Vice President Academic and Dean (VPAD) authorized the hiring for 2019-2020 of a Lecturer, who will teach seven courses. Additional courses will be offered by sessional instructors.	The Department Chair will take the lead, in consultation with SJU senior administration.	Fall 2019 A Lecturer was hired on a one-year contract, effective Sept 1, 2019-Aug. 31, 2020.
		b) The VPAD authorized the search for a tenure-track position effective July 1, 2020, subject to budgetary approval.	Department Chair	July 2020 The program has begun the search for a tenure-track position, effective July 1, 2020, subject to budgetary approval.
		c) The VPAD has requested a five-year plan for growth, to be delivered no later than the end of the Fall 2019 term.	The Department Chair will take the lead, in consultation with SJU senior administration.	The Chair submitted the plan in August 2019. The department has already taken measures to enrich the Italian Studies program. For example, in Spring 2020, in collaboration with the University of Guelph, students will have the opportunity to study in Sorrento, Italy.
2.	The Department of Italian and French Studies should also consider offering some key culture courses online to attract larger numbers of students. The development of such courses requires, however, support from the	The VPAD has authorized the Chair to propose new online courses, to be approved at SJU and the University of Waterloo in Winter 2020.	Department Chair	2023 Depending on the capacity of the CEL to accommodate these requests, one course will ideally

	administration in the form of a tenure-track faculty member who can manifest a longer-term commitment to the program and the institution.			be launched in 2021-2022, and another by 2023.
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The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.



Date of next program review

2025-2026

Date

Signatures of Approval

December 10, 2019

Chair/Director

Date

December 10, 2019

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only)

Date

Jan 26 / 20

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.

January 2020

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: Italian Studies Minor

Name of Reviewer: Benoit Charbonneau

Date: 1/14/2020

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

This FAR is well-written and clearly addresses the external reviewers' recommendations.

Requested Revisions

Minor edits were suggested by this reviewer and adopted. Some reworking of the report had to be done regarding resourcing and feasibility of passing through the various University academic bodies. The revised report addresses these concerns.

Checklist for SUC/SGRC Reviewer Feedback

Quality Assurance Office

Final Assessment Report: Italian Studies Minor

Name of Reviewer: Marlee M. Spafford

Date: 1/14/2020

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

This FAR is well-written and clearly addresses the external reviewers' recommendations.

Requested Revisions

Some minor edits were suggested and adopted. A small number of statements required clarification, including:

- Specify the challenging circumstances that SJU instructors faced in delivering a quality program (p. 3).
- Add context to the Recommendation #1 response that explains the use of the term 'Mission Critical' (p. 3-4).
- Indicate the University of Guelph collaboration into the Recommendation #1 response (p. 3-4) that is mentioned in the table (p. 5).
- Clarify who is the lead in responding to each Recommendation (p. 5-6).
- Update Recommendation response timelines, as needed (p. 5-6).

Requested changes were made.