

# Update Report and Action Plan

## Italian Studies Minor

### August 2025

#### Executive Summary

Consistent with the University of Waterloo’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), stand-alone minors, diplomas, and comparable credentials are subject to a seven-year desk review cycle. This review provides an opportunity for program leadership to evaluate program quality and to plan targeted enhancements.

A self-study was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic, on July 23, 2025. Following the self-study, the Vice-President Academic and Dean, and the Faculty Dean reviewed and responded to the program’s action plan.

Program leaders identified five actions, focusing on advertisement, “Study in Italy” program, diploma pathways, courses of interest to other UW students, and work options for those pursuing the Minor; and included a timeline for implementation in their plan. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for **2032-2033**.

This report is based on information extracted from the self-study and action plan.

#### Number of Students Who Graduated with the Credential

Table 2a Number of Students who Graduated with a Minor in Academic Plan: Italian Studies														
Program Level	Total Number of Graduates (#) and percentage on the Dean’s Honours List (DHL)													
	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	#	% DHL	#	% DHL	#	% DHL	#	% DHL	#	% DHL	#	% DHL	#	% DHL
General	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Honours	0	0.0%	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
Honours Co-op	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

\*In 2024 we did have the first 2 students who graduated and obtained the DIPLOMA in Italian Language. They both obtained Term Distinction Achievement.

Notes:

1. Data includes headcounts only.
2. Degree Year is the year of the student's convocation (when the degree is awarded - which may be different than the date when the degree completion requirements were met.)
3. Data includes AFIW students, if applicable.

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### **Program Characteristics**

Italian Language and Italian Studies at St. Jerome's University offers a Minor in Italian Studies which comprises of at least two Italian Language courses and six courses in Italian Studies (two of which can be courses from an approved list of courses in related fields). Currently Italian Studies offers a total of 17 Italian Language/Italian Studies courses every academic year. We have a MoU with the University of Guelph and Brock University to collaborate on the offer of upper year courses. Italian Studies also offers a Diploma in Italian Language which requires students to take four Italian language courses. Students may concurrently pursue both the Diploma and the Minor.

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### **Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Opportunities from the Self-Study**

#### **Strengths**

- The strength of Italian Studies continues to be teaching excellence. Student surveys carried out for this review revealed high levels of satisfaction, and this was attributed primarily to the passion, dedication, and enthusiasm of their instructors.
- The introduction of the Diploma in Italian Language has also contributed to attracting more students to the upper-level language courses. We currently have 10 students pursuing the Diploma in Italian Language.
- Enrolment in practically all beginner Italian language courses (over 100 students per class every semester) and Italian culture courses (close to 100 students per class every semester) has remained strong for the last four years. Our new course offerings, ITALST 100 Understanding Modern Italy and long-time favorites ITALST 111 Sex, Marriage and Family Traditions in Italy and ITALST 265 The Mafia, continue to draw over 60-100 students when they are offered.
- Over the years, class size in upper-level literature courses (ITALST 291 Italian Culture and Civilization I, ITALST 292 Italian Culture and Civilization II, ITALST 263 Illness and Contagion in Italian Literature and Film) has improved; this was mainly attributed to the collective efforts in the Department to develop online and blended versions of the same course which proved to be more attractive to students.

### **Weaknesses**

- As stated above, the major weakness remains attracting students to pursue the Minor in Italian Studies. All five measures proposed in the Action Plan are meant to start to tackle this problem.

### **Challenges**

- Our greatest challenge has been convincing students of the value in pursuing a Minor in Italian Studies. The number of students who see value in pursuing the Minor remains admittedly modest and, despite having two students obtaining the Diploma in 2024, we had no students obtaining the Minor in that year.
- We also faced chronically low enrolment in in-person culture courses. This problem has started to be resolved by developing these courses online.

### **Opportunities**

- The Blended version of several ITAL and ITALST courses has proven to be an effective way to allow students who want the in-person learning experience to fully immerse themselves in that learning environment while at the same time achieve the high number of registered students typical of online courses. Since the BLND courses offered so far have worked so well (in both ITAL 101 and 102), we are planning to expand the BLND offer to ITALST courses, and we are currently developing ITALST 112 ONLN and ITALST 112 BLND with the AGILE team at CEL.

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### **Action Plan**

The program has managed to substantially increase its overall enrolment as well as successfully launch the Italian Language Diploma. There are currently 10 students pursuing the Italian Language B2- level Diploma and two students graduated with the Diploma in 2024.

As stated above, the introduction of the Diploma in Italian Language in 2021 has decidedly increased the number of students who pursue the upper-year language courses and thus we now have more students who take four language courses. The introduction of the Diploma, however, has not yet translated into a substantial increase in students also taking up the Minor. In departmental meetings, faculty members have started to brainstorm strategies to attempt to convince students who have already decided to pursue the Diploma to take another four Italian Studies courses to also complete a Minor in Italian Studies. It has been agreed that for this to

start to happen students need to learn about the Italian Studies program at St. Jerome's early in their first year so that they have the necessary time to plan their course selection and allocate enough courses to Italian Language and Italian Studies. Faculty members have discussed various strategies to reach out to UW/SJU students and promote the program with first-year students. Faculty have also discussed the importance of attracting students to the Program by offering a feasible Study in Italy experience, creating more 'relatable' Italian Studies courses, creating a FastTrack to the Diploma for Italian heritage speakers/learners with some background in Italian, and creating a solid system that offers work experience in the Department to all students pursuing the Minor.

### **General Commentary (VPAD)**

While the number of enrolments in the Diploma and Minor remain modest the Department has been proactive in also creating and offering larger enrolment courses in Italian Studies that have become popular online offerings as electives. They have also been proactive in building out a partnership with Guelph for upper year lower enrolment courses where each institution offers it every other year and are open to being part of broader University initiatives in the languages to create more collaboration. For these reasons, I continue to support efforts to achieve more growth in the diploma and minor and do not consider them to be guilty of the kind of magical thinking I sometimes find in other programs.

### **General Commentary (Arts)**

As unshared programming, we do not play a role in the decision-making about Italian Studies. We are happy to support our colleagues in the AFIW and in this field and extend our compliments regarding the increases in enrolments and the effective management of programming in Italian Studies.

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### **Action 1: Advertising the Diploma and Minor with all ITAL/ITALST first-year courses: ITAL 101, ITALST 100, ITALST 111**

Some of these first-year courses are offered almost every semester, and the enrolment is consistently 100+ in every iteration. Our best efforts need to be channeled to make sure that these students are fully aware of what Italian Studies at SJU has to offer.

A targeted Advertising Campaign in the most popular courses—ITAL 101, ITALST 100, ITALST 295 and ITALST 111/112 has been carried out throughout 2025-2026 and is now more focused during this summer 2026 semester.

These concerted efforts involve all instructors to make better and more effective use of the departmental social media (SJU Facebook page, SJU Instagram account, and the departmental YouTube channel where we showcase all our events).

- a) These concerted efforts need to involve all instructors to make better and more effective use of the departmental social media (SJU Facebook page, SJU Instagram account, and the departmental YouTube channel where we showcase all our events).
- b) Colleagues in Italian Studies need to advertise the next-level Italian language/culture course by visiting the first-year classroom (including virtual visits and/or pre-recorded short promotional videos). Instructors who teach upper-year Italian Studies courses may want to send an advanced draft of their course outline to students in first-year courses to pique their curiosity about course content in subsequent offers.
- c) Students who have obtained a Minor in Italian Studies and/or a Diploma in Italian Language can be invited to briefly address first-year students in our first-year courses to explain how these studies (Minor and/or Diploma in Italian) have helped them in their careers.

#### **Dean's Response (VPAD, St. Jerome)**

I support the program's proposed course of action and am prepared to identify resources as appropriate.

#### **Dean's Response (Arts)**

We are happy to endorse the proposed course of action.

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#### **Action 2: Creation of a feasible "Study in Italy" program**

Despite our efforts, we have not been able to run a feasible "Study in Italy" program since summer 2022. We believe that a Study in Italy program, run collaboratively with another similarly sized Italian Studies program, could attract more students to pursue the Minor in Italian Studies, given that this experience would render the program unique. In our course calendar, we currently have two course codes in ITALST that would allow students to take up to two Italian Studies courses in Italy as experiential learning/field study.

**Dean's Response (VPAD, St. Jerome)**

I would very much like to see this happen because I can see the pedagogical implications of this type of experiential learning. Costs associated with any proposals brought forward by the department will need to be considered and may be a barrier to achieving this objective. That said, given the historical and cultural importance of Italy/Rome to a place with a Catholic mission my office commits to exploring philanthropic possibilities.

**Dean's Response (Arts)**

We are happy to endorse this initiative (although we are not in a position to support in material ways).

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**Action 3: Create more pathways to achieve the Diploma (and eventually the Minor)**

Instructors discussed the possibility of Introducing more pathways to give additional opportunities to students of Italian language to achieve the Diploma.

We firmly believe that the way to increase students pursuing the Minor in Italian Studies is to first encourage more students to declare their Diploma. For this reason, we plan to introduce the following measures:

- a) compact ITAL 155 that compresses together ITAL 101 and ITAL 102 and fast-tracks students (especially students with a background in Italian, for example, heritage speakers), towards attainment of the Diploma (and eventually Minor). This entails changing the existing course description of ITAL 155, changing the Diploma description, and following the UGAG procedure to obtain modifications in the course calendar. These changes will be proposed in the fall 2026 UGAG.
- b) Introduction of the second-level Italian Language course to be offered every summer in collaboration with Italian Studies at University of Guelph. This will offer students another possibility to take the necessary second-level course before declaring the Diploma and pursuing the two final Intermediate Italian courses. A draft MoU has just been circulated (in June 2025) about this agreement. This initiative has just started this summer 2026 semester.

**Dean's Response (VPAD, St. Jerome)**

I support the program's proposed actions here contingent on ongoing evaluation of enrolments.

### Dean's Response (Arts)

We concur with the view of the VPAD, St. Jerome's.

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#### **Action 4: Create more Italian Studies courses that could be of direct interest to UW students**

Drawing UW students to Italian is the first challenge in that many first-year university students do not know what Italian Studies as a discipline has to offer. Most first-year students did not have the opportunity to choose Italian at high school and thus it is unclear to them what this area of study stands for or has to offer. Drawing students to Italian thus implies understanding UW students' interests and what they perceive to be of value to complement their core programs and trying to explore those interests through Italian Studies. In this light we have already created the course **ITALST 261 *Italy by Design*** to attract students at the Cambridge School of Architecture and students registered at the Stratford School of Business and Interactive Design. This course is scheduled to be offered for the first time in the academic year 2027-28.

The survey results for this Program Review have also revealed that many students are interested in practical courses that could be of interest to learn quotidian skills that enrich and better one's everyday life. In this regard, we are planning to propose **Italian Gastronomy**, a course that would teach not just the historical, geographical, and regional aspects of Italian cuisine but would also include hands-on preparation of Italian dishes.

A third new course that Italian Studies will be proposing was suggested by several students who have an interest in the Manga and Anime world. The course will tackle both a diachronic and synchronic study of **The Italian Superhero: Comics and Caricatures** throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Of these three courses, *ITALST 261 Italy by Design* is already in our course calendar. The other two courses will be proposed in the fall 2026 UGAG. In spring 2027, we intend to launch Italian Gastronomy as a Special Topic course to assess students' interest. This is feasible because in spring 2027, Guelph will be hosting ITAL 102 and thus we can dedicate the stipend that usually covers the teaching of ITAL 102 to the teaching of this new course.

### Dean's Response (VPAD, St. Jerome)

I support the program's proposed actions here contingent on them not requiring additional budget for faculty lines. The goal should be to limit contingent work and create a sustainable number of offerings where courses do not cannibalize from each other or from other allied fields.

**Dean's Response (Arts)**

We concur with the response from the VPAD, St. Jerome's.

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**Action 5: Create work-related opportunities within the Department for students pursuing the Minor**

At present some Teaching Assistant opportunities within the Department have been assigned to undergraduate students pursuing the Minor in Italian Studies. These opportunities have been limited to Teaching Assistantships in the Italian Language Beginner course. Given that the Department has other revenues from grants, more Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant opportunities should be created for all undergraduate students pursuing the Minor in Italian Studies and the Diploma in Italian Language.

The Research Assistant opportunities could vary from organizing and running the *cinforum*, assisting in the conversation circle, sorting, cataloguing and organizing our collection of books in Italian (donated by SJU library), and helping graduate students who are assigned unit writing for online courses. Overall, students pursuing the Diploma in Italian Language and the Minor in Italian Studies could be better integrated in the Department to get more hands-on experience.

**Dean's Response (VPAD, St. Jerome)**

I support the program's proposed course of action and am prepared to identify resources as appropriate.

**Dean's Response (Arts)**

We concur with the response from the VPAD, St. Jerome's.

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### Action Plan Summary

ACTION	DETAILS AND RESOURCES REQUIRED	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
1. Advertising the Diploma and Minor with all ITAL/ITALST first-year courses	Coordinating all instructors in advertising courses from one level to the next	Department Chair and all instructors at Italian Studies SJU	Starting in September 2025 and following through all year. Review after each year.
2. Creation of a feasible Study in Italy program	Discussions have been ongoing with different programs. Meetings with possible partners will continue until the right partner is found.	Department Chair	Within the next 1-2 years, plan is to have agreement with another Italian Studies Program.
3. Create more pathways to achieve the Diploma (and eventually the Minor)	Drafting of documents and working with the Associate Dean will start in September to bring the necessary modifications to UGAG	Department Chair	Start planning in September 2026 to submit all documentation to UGAG.
4. Create more Italian Studies courses that could be of direct interest to UW students	Drafting documents and working with the Associate Dean will start in September to bring the new course proposals forward.	Department Chair and all faculty at Italian Studies SJU	Start planning in September 2026 to submit all documentation to UGAG.
5. Create work-related opportunities within the Department for students pursuing the Minor	Work closely with all students pursuing the Diploma and /or the Minor in Italian Studies to understand how to valorize their strengths to benefit the Program.	Department Chair and instructors teaching upper-level language courses	Once the amount of money awarded in grants is known (usually around the beginning of September), we can budget for RA positions designated for students pursuing the Minor in Italian Studies.

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

Date of next program review \_\_\_\_\_ 2032-2033  
Date

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### Signatures of Approval



*Please keep this document in Word version. We do require you to sign it or demonstrate your approval. If you have issues with signing a Word document, please confirm your approval by adding the following wording when you send back the document by email "I hereby approve the attached document." We will collect formal signatures at a later stage on a pdf version.*

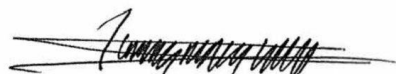
Roberta Cauchi-Santoro \_\_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

Chair/Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date



February 5, 2026

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only) \_\_\_\_\_ Date



March 23, 2026

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.



November 5, 2025

Associate Vice-President, Academic \_\_\_\_\_ Date



(For undergraduate programs)