

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Major strengths of the Academic Program**

The University of Victoria's Department of French is a cohesive and welcoming unit. It consists of a well-knit community of professors, sessional lecturers and staff members. For most of them, the professors have a very good level of research engagement, and are well known, in Canada and beyond its borders, for their expertise. The rather small size of the unit provides a « family like » atmosphere, which is much appreciated by the students.

The Department also offers formation in a diverse though balanced range of literacies: cultural, linguistic, literary and digital.

#### **Areas of weakness or in need of further development**

The unit suffers from a lack of distinctive visibility, especially if compared to local « competitors », such as UBC or Simon Fraser. The members of the committee all felt that the unit suffers from a lack of proper « branding », and that, as a consequence, it did not enjoy as high a profile as it could. A well-defined international strategic plan, as well as a solid indigenous plan, would prove highly beneficial. There is a definite need to improve mobility for professors and students within the francophone world and more specifically within Canada.

As a consequence, too few students are registered at the graduate level. In fact, the goal set for the Department has never been reached, which may also plead for a reasonable reevaluation of that goal. There is a definite need to raise recruitment effort at the graduate level.

The unit acknowledges the need for qualified teachers of French in the lower mainland and in South Vancouver Island, yet is not able to pinpoint the reasons why the students registration do not echo that need ; there is a definite need to assess these reasons, and improve the recruitment in that area.

#### **Comments on the future direction of the Academic Program**

The unit should insist more on and make more of the bilingual status of the country. In that perspective, members of the committee consider that it should play a role in the Academic Writing Requirement. This could be achieved by the creation of a French option, students being given the choice.

The unit should take a more definite advantage of the huge basin of teachers of French involved in the immersion program. There does not seem to be a direct connection between the

immersion program and the Department as provider of expertise in the francophone literature, language and culture.

Also, there is a need for a reflection on how French (francophone literature, language and culture) fits into the Humanities as a whole, and on how it could be more efficiently integrated. In that regard, there should be a more ethically driven statement on why French should be at the very core of the Humanities. In other words, more emphasis should be made on French as an international language and culture.

More trans-departmental programming could also prove beneficial, both in the interest of the Department and of the students.

Considering the diverse expertise available within the unit in that area, It seems more and more convincing to the members of the committee that one possible branding strategy would be to focus on Digital Humanities, both in teaching and research, with the possibility, for example, of creating a certificate in DH.

There is also a need for more community engagement from the unit, be it within the Faculty, at the institutional level, or with the community at large.