

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR February 2018 SENATE**

FOR INFORMATION

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY'S
ITALIAN STUDIES PROGRAM
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

In accordance with the Laurentian University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian's response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; and who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations. The report also lists any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN
ITALIAN STUDIES**

On February 24, 2017, the program submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University.

The self-study presented an overview of the program and then reviewed the program's self-perception of the faculty, physical and financial resources, students, and program outcomes. It concluded with an overall assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. Appendices 1 – 8 provide the following information: the faculty and their teaching loads; both library and physical resources; courses offered with enrolments and graduates over the past five years; program regulations and course descriptions from the university calendar; course outlines and methods of determining grades and exams; student evaluations; current student comments and letters from former students; and CVs of the faculty.

On April 18 and 19, 2017, after reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The external reviewer was Dr. Michael Lettieri, Chair of the Department of Language Studies at the University of Toronto. In addition, the team consisted of two Laurentian professors, Dr. Janice Liedl from the department of History in the Faculty of Arts and Prof. Jean-Charles Cachon from the Faculty of Management. Finally, the team included two students in the program, Mackenzie Creasey and Olivia Francesconi.

During the visit, the external reviewers met with the Vice-President Academic and Provost, as well as with the Dean of Arts. The entire review team met with the acting Chair and with a group of students and graduates of the program. In addition, the team met with three community stakeholders: Laura Stradiotto, Freelance reporter with the Sudbury Star; John Cimino, Manager of Caruso Club; and Damien

Laframboise, former student. Additionally, the review team met with the librarian supporting the program. The reviewers also toured the facilities of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department

On May 29, 2017, the reviewers submitted their report. In it they commented “ITAL serves its various constituencies well, and is responsive to the multiple needs of a university with a diverse student body, and a diverse faculty and staff. ITAL does this with limited resources, and it does it extremely well.” In addition, they noted that:

- The Italian Studies Program is consistent with Laurentian University’s mission and academic plans.
- The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear and in alignment with the university’s statement of undergraduate degree level expectations.
- The ITA program is structured in such a way so as to maximize the student’s potential for academic excellence in the areas of Italian language, literature, linguistics, and culture.
- ITAL does a great job in helping the University’s extraordinarily diverse students reap the full benefits of their studies by providing students with very effective, ‘high-impact’ educational practices aimed at increasing rates of student retention and student engagement and preparing students to be global citizens and meet global challenges.
- The modes of delivery are appropriate and effective to meet with the program’s learning outcomes. The means of assessment are appropriate and effective to demonstrate achievement of the program learning objectives and the program’s own degree level expectations.
- ITA has a defined role in serving the regional mandate of Laurentian University. One of the focuses of their pedagogy and research is the local Italian-Canadian experience. They offer courses and publish research and creative work in this area. From a pedagogical and cultural perspective, they stage an annual Italian theatre production featuring students enrolled in their Italian courses. As far as we are aware, ITA’s troupe (*Le maschere laurenziane*) is the only Italian theatre troupe in Canada that stages plays every year. This co-curricular activity has a two-fold function: 1) that of using the theatrical stage as a context to improve the linguistic/communicative capabilities of the student; 2) that of offering live Italian theater for people living in the Sudbury region (Italian Studies at Laurentian University is, in fact, a major cultural point of reference for the Italian-Canadians living in the Sudbury Region).
- The students are greatly appreciative of the dedication and availability of faculty and staff. They feel at home in the Department and conveyed to us their satisfaction with their learning experiences.
- They were quite impressed by the collective quality and quantity of published research of the members of the entire unit.

On September 5, 2017, the Office of the Provost received the joint reaction of the Unit and Dr. Elizabeth Dawes, Dean of Arts. It forms the basis of what follows:

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE DEPARTMENT’S (U) RESPONSES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (D)

R1: ITAL is committed to expose undergraduate students to cultural and linguistic diversity within Canada and across the globe, and to provide them with the skills needed in our

interconnected societies. To that end, ITAL should continue offering possibilities for study abroad programs. Students enjoy the study abroad programs in Udine, and are happy to see that other opportunities are sought (ITAL will be offering also courses in Siena, Tuscany, as another possibility for study abroad). Distance Education courses could also be an area for future development.

U1: Under “Summary and Recommendations,” there is a reference to the idea of creating distance courses. This could be a strategically useful initiative, but it would require resources we currently do not have to develop distance courses.

D1: To date, Laurentian University has not invested in the development of online language courses with the exception of a recent minor in *Langue et linguistique* for students who already speak French.

R2: We recommend that ITAL continue to do the many positive things that it already does such as excellence in teaching (cutting edge methodology), the development of a true sense of academic community, the honing of well-defined syllabi with special attention to goals and objectives, and formative and summative assessment of what is taught. The practice of some universities is to offer a final summative academic project or experience (capstone course, formal presentation, composite set of work completed in the Department in the form of a portfolio to be assessed, and so forth). This type of activity would also prepare students for their post-graduate plans through *résumé* or *curriculum vitae* preparation.

U2: The Italian program recognizes the need to engage students in hands on research and work related learning. All three faculty members have hired undergraduate students as research assistants in the past and intend to do so in the future as well. Students enrolled in the History of Italian Theatre and Italian Theatre Practicum courses are involved in all aspects of staging a play, from acting, to stage-managing, to designing costumes, and creating programs. Students enrolled in ITAL 3557 (Italian Canadian Literature) in the fall of 2017 will have the unique opportunity of being in contact and dialogue with the Italian Canadian author they are researching, as they will be directly involved in the conference that Italian Studies is organizing with the AICW here at Laurentian for September 2017.

D2: Students in Italian Studies have many opportunities to work closely with faculty members on research projects, on the annual theatre production, or as a tutor.

R3: More specifically, the unit enjoys a national and international reputation in the area of second-language acquisition, methodology, pedagogy and theory; linguistic acculturation of the Italian community of Ontario; the internment of Italians in Canada during WW2; and Medieval to Modern Italian literature and thought. By building on these existing strengths, the unit should be able to secure additional external funding. We are cognizant of the fact that such large-scale projects take a great deal of time, effort, and good will on the part of all involved. Nevertheless, the unit, as noted, has a proven track record: Paul Colilli alone has been the recipient of 7 SSHRC Standard research grants. The faculty’s efforts to seek outside funding are, however, laudatory, especially, given the traditional challenges that Humanities programs face in securing such external funding. We encourage faculty members to continue applying for these funds. Major grants are not a condition for successful research language and literature, but they constitute an important

performance indicator in Canada. Grant applications can also be considered as an act of good citizenship, for the standing of the department and the opportunities it creates for the students in terms of research assistantships. Some departments give course release to elicit grant applications (however, we were informed that Paul Colilli has never received a course release).

- U3: The Reviewers recommend that we be more proactive in applying for SSHRC funding. They also acknowledge that Paul Colilli has in the past been awarded 7 Standard Research Grants. While we agree that this is a laudable and strategically significant idea, we also recognize that, similar to many other researchers in the Arts, we are able to be productive with the resources that the University makes available to us. [...] Of course, the idea is that a SSHRC grant will allow one to attend conferences and hire students to do research. The fact is that between LURF and the Professional Allowance we are able to cover these costs. In the end, however, for a Humanities researcher what makes the difference in her/his academic career is the body of publications produced. Our experience has been that the currency used to speak about a researcher's success is the quality of the books, articles and creative writing in print. Accomplishments in grantsmanship, while deemed important, never come up in book reviews or the critical evaluation of an academic's intellectual output.
- D3: Faculty members in Italian Studies are active in producing both scholarly publications and creative works. The department offers an undergraduate program whereas SSHRC gives a lot of weight to the training of graduate students.
- R4: More specifically, one issue that should be noted concerning the play is the following: since ITA does not have a budget designated for the play, they rely on the gracious support of the Dean of Arts and the ticket sales in order to fund the performances. The plays are part of the curriculum in that the students are awarded a 10% participation mark that can be applied to any Italian studies course they choose. The plays are also a recruitment/retention tool and a community outreach activity. Also, the costs for booking the auditorium and the technical support are becoming untenable. In order to continue their theatrical work, ITA will need a fixed budget line just for the play.**
- U4: The Italian Studies program has very close ties to the Sudbury Italian Community who continues to support the program's activities such as the Cinefora and the Italian plays staged by *Le maschere laurenziane*, which celebrated their 25th year anniversary this past February. Unfortunately, without any financial commitment on the part of the University, it is uncertain if we will be able to cover the rising production costs (sound and lighting costs alone are estimated to be over \$2,200 for our 2018 performances).
- D4: As Dean of Arts, I will explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated budget line for the Italian theatre, which has been running for 25 years.
- R5: The faculty has a wealth of supporters across the region, such as alumni who remain involved in theatrical productions and Italian-Canadians who appreciate these shows. The Advancement Office should see this deep integration of Italian studies with the community as an unparalleled opportunity to fundraise for the popular program and its students.**

- U5: About two years ago, a person from the Advancement Office asked our department what our fund raising priorities were. We obliged and responded with the requested information. However, since then we have not heard from Advancement. What seems to not be understood, is that there are indeed potential donors who would be happy to give and/or fundraise for the benefit of the Italian Studies program. The fact that we are not on Advancement's radar is resulting in missed donation opportunities. We would be happy to collaborate with Advancement on this matter.
- D5: I would encourage the Advancement Office to seek donors within the Italian community in Sudbury.
- R6: Italian Studies does not have a permanent tutorial space. The program has to negotiate tutorial space with the Registrar's office. As a result of this situation, all pedagogical materials pertaining to the tutorials are stored elsewhere.**
- U6: We acknowledge the reviewers' comments about the lack of library resources for our faculty and students and would like to add that we also lack a proper tutorial space and budget that would allow us to purchase computer programs for our tutorial leaders to use in their tutorials/labs. In terms of space for our tutorials, we are currently sharing room L712 with other departments. The room is a regular classroom with no computers and no storage space.
- D6: As the Campus Modernization project nears completion, the issue of a tutorial space should be revisited.

ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN endorses the recommendations of the Review Team but notes the Unit and the Dean will not follow up the following recommendations as they are either redundant or outside of their current scope of focus:

- R1: ITAL is committed to expose undergraduate students to cultural and linguistic diversity within Canada and across the globe, and to provide them with the skills needed in our interconnected societies. To that end, ITAL should continue offering possibilities for study abroad programs. Students enjoy the study abroad programs in Udine, and are happy to see that other opportunities are sought (ITAL will be offering also courses in Siena, Tuscany, as another possibility for study abroad). Distance Education courses could also be an area for future development.** There are no plans to begin developing distance education courses in Italian at this time or in the near future.
- R2: We recommend that ITAL continue to do the many positive things that it already does such as excellence in teaching (cutting edge methodology), the development of a true sense of academic community, the honing of well-defined syllabi with special attention to goals and objectives, and formative and summative assessment of what is taught. The practice of some universities is to offer a final summative academic project or experience (capstone course, formal presentation, composite set of work completed in the Department in the form of a portfolio to be assessed, and so forth). This type of activity would also prepare students for their post-graduate plans through *résumé* or *curriculum vitae* preparation. Both the unit and**

the Dean commented on the fact that students are given ample opportunity to work hands-on with faculty as tutors or in various positions for the yearly play.

- R3. We encourage faculty members to continue applying for these funds. Major grants are not a condition for successful research language and literature, but they constitute an important performance indicator in Canada. Grant applications can also be considered as an act of good citizenship, for the standing of the department and the opportunities it creates for the students in terms of research assistantships.** The faculty of the unit has no plans to change how it currently applies for external funding.

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM
IN ITALIAN STUDIES**

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline
4. In order to continue their theatrical work, ITA will need a fixed budget line just for the play.	Establish a dedicated budget line for the theatre production costs.	Chair working with Dean of Arts	February 2018
5. The faculty has a wealth of supporters across the region, such as alumni who remain involved in theatrical productions and Italian-Canadians who appreciate these shows. The Advancement Office should see this deep integration of Italian studies with the community as an unparalleled opportunity to fundraise for the popular program and its students.	Identify and approach potential donors in the Sudbury community/alumni of program to raise funds for the program	Chair working with Advancement Office	July 2018
6: Italian Studies does not have a permanent tutorial space. The program has to negotiate tutorial	Creating a dedicated tutorial space and receiving a budget for software programs on computers dedicated to	Chair working with Dean of Arts	September 2018

<p>space with the Registrar's office. As a result of this situation, all pedagogical materials pertaining to the tutorials are stored elsewhere.</p>	<p>tutors</p>		
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The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean's Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University's web site.

CONCLUSION

The Italian Studies Program is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2024.