Academic Program Review
Summary of Review

Department: French
Faculty: Humanities
Date of Report: April 2008

The APRC is firmly convinced that the Department of French at UVic is a first class unit. This conclusion is based upon the Departments impressive record of scholarship of professors, the quality of teaching and programs offered. The Department is strong in its teaching resources identified by a fine cohort of continuing full time faculty, staff members, and dedicated and professional sessional instructors. The Faculty has a strong national reputation for solid research in their fields. This fact is reflected in the exceptionally high level of success in such national competitions for research funding as SSHRC, in which the department has a track record which may be among the strongest for language departments in the country. The APRC indicates that recommendations are focused on building on existing strengths based on an already high level of achievement in both teaching and scholarship.

With respect to programmatic offerings the APRC makes the following recommendations: the department consider the development of a PhD program; requirements of the English and French Combined Major be reviewed with a focus on student satisfaction and learning experience; research be undertaken to determine the type of course(s) that would encourage former immersion students to include first and second year French courses in their option selections; determine the level of interest in and the opportunity to offer French 150 and or 155 in the summer session; implementation of a French placement test; the development of Major and Honours streams; upper level courses be reviewed and revised in a similar manner to initiatives already taken with first and second year courses; and that the department select certain areas of strong literary specialization to be integrated into the 3rd and 4th year programs.

Administrative recommendations include review of practices regarding the inclusion of sessional instructors in departmental affairs and decisions, and the development of a student manual for graduate studies.

The APRC was very impressed with quality and size of the CALL (Centre for Advanced Language Learning) facility but would like the department to examine the current use of this facility by its students and look at ways in which to connect their courses with use of this facility.

The Dean was pleased that the Department engaged in a retreat following the release of the APRC report to consider the recommendations as a group. The department is actively addressing the suggestions and the concerns that have been raised, especially regarding the structure of its curriculum in order to make certain that it is manageable, sensible and meeting students’ needs. The report strongly suggested that the department define what it means by “literature” within the context of a French department. The Dean fully supports the department’s decision to take a measured approached to this recommendation along with the hiring suggestions made by the APRC. While the APRC recommends immediate action, the department, with the support of the Dean and Provost, agree that careful reflection is best at this time. The department is continuing to develop a vision of its future as it goes through the process of faculty renewal over the next few years in the wake of the retirement of a number of colleagues. The Dean indicates that discussions between the departments of French and English have improved and that he sees movement towards a more positive future relationship. The Dean and Provost also support the Department’s decision to concentrate their efforts on curricular re-development and growth of the MA program at this time as opposed to allocating such time and resources to the development of a PhD proposal as suggested by the APRC.

The Provost congratulates the Department of French on completing the review and on its group effort in responding to the APRC’s recommendation.