

External Review of the English Language Centre

November, 2025

External Review Committee

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Executive Summary

The University of Victoria's English Language Centre (ELC) is an impressive and effectively organized operation that offers a suite of programs for students who seek to improve their general and/or academic English language skills. Housed in an appropriate, bright, and cheerful facility, the programs offer multiple student supports, including a well-equipped learning centre, multiple sociocultural activities, highly dedicated program staff and instructors, and a remarkable team of Cultural Assistants who are both a highlight and a differentiator of the program.

Staff report that the unit has the appropriate number of positions to support its current business, and are aware of opportunities for improvements that could enhance the ability of the ELC to attract more students overall. The instructors are highly engaged in their work and deeply committed to the students. Many staff and instructors have been with the program for a very long time—not just years but decades. On multiple occasions over our two-day visit, reviewers heard the programs described as life-changing. There is no question that the ELC is an excellent example of English-language programs in Canada.

However, reviewers were asked to identify opportunities for improvement; our eight key recommendations are summarized below. We want to emphasize the importance of the need for an accelerated process of curriculum review. While this project is underway, progress seems to be very slow. Conversations with the curriculum coordinators and the instructors suggest that a relatively small financial investment would likely yield a strong return, particularly given instructors' readiness and enthusiasm to do the work of curriculum revision, pilot-testing, and subsequent refinement. We recommend that the curriculum renewal project be extended to include the shorter courses, which currently lack clear, measurable outcomes among other key elements.

Other recommendations include considerations regarding clarity of communication, particularly about the unit's financial standing, data collection and use, expanding recruitment activities, and addressing the challenges of artificial intelligence.

Overall, however, we are unanimous in our praise for the ELC. It is a strong and well-managed unit whose impact on students is evident. With targeted investments, increased communication, and a more accelerated approach to curriculum renewal, the ELC is well positioned not only to respond to current challenges but to further strengthen its role as a leader in English language education. The dedication of its staff, the quality of the student experience, and the solid foundations already in place provide sound infrastructure for continued success and sustainable growth in an increasingly complex and competitive international education environment.

Key Recommendations

1. Complete and implement the ELPI curriculum for all levels, incorporating lessons learned from the pilot.
2. Improve course outlines across ELC to ensure consistency, clarity, and alignment with best practices.
3. Increase transparency and consistency in budget communication throughout the unit.
4. Integrate Indigenous perspectives and content more fully into the curriculum, beginning with newly revised curriculum and including this in future course revisions.
5. Identify, track, and regularly review key performance indicators (KPIs) for both program quality and marketing effectiveness.
6. Expand the use of digital media for communication as well as marketing.
7. Balance diversification of recruitment markets with responsiveness to the needs of students from target countries.
8. Incorporate ethical and effective use of AI into teaching and learning practices across the program.