

**External Review of the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies
June 23–25, 2021**

Review Committee:

Dr. Sandra Parmegiani (University of Guelph)

Dr. Erin Campbell (University of Victoria)

Dr. Enrique Ávila López (Mount Royal University), Chair of the Academic Program review committee

Executive Summary

After looking at the 2014 Academic Review Final Report, it is clear that some of the scenarios envisioned by the reviewers, such as loss of positions and dramatic contraction of faculty complement, have by now become a reality.

One of the first things that struck the review committee was the dramatic contraction of faculty members since 2017 and lack of renewal/replacement with the loss of four full time faculty members, which has led to the loss of the Italian Studies Program, the Hispanic and Italian Studies combined major, the Mediterranean Studies Program, and the Graduate Programs. This has had a negative impact on EETS with a corresponding contraction in the number of sections taught. The cancellation of the Graduate Program in both Spanish and Italian, is particularly grave. It was mainly due to low enrollment and the fact that out of four initial graduating students, two abandoned the program while the other two remain unfinished, and it was noted that only one attended this meeting. These multiple eliminations have generated multiple effects and repercussions. As a result, the most immediate consequence is morale at all levels is quite low. The committee identifies such eliminations as a serious problem, which highlights the lack of investment the Department has received since 2014 Academic Program Review, and possibly before then. In other words, these eliminations are not attributable to the Department itself alone but are also due to the lack of support the Department has received from the Faculty and the University administration. Paraphrasing Cicero's *On Duties*, "non nobis solum" ("not for ourselves alone").

More retirements might materialize in the next five years, which would present another serious challenge to the department, even in view of amalgamation with other language and literature departments, and enhanced interdisciplinarity and integration with other programs.

Another serious issue within the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies is the abrupt change in leadership and loss of a faculty member when a past Chair suddenly relinquished her appointment as a Chair within the Department to join another unit and become Director of another program at UVic. Also, the Italian Studies Program underwent a dramatic reduction in resources and ultimately was terminated. These events have understandably had a demoralizing effect on the members of the Department that was palpable during our online meetings.

Recommendations:

1. Amalgamation with other language departments would be beneficial for everyone. In the event of a drastic reduction of faculty complement, the 2014 reviewers had already suggested amalgamation and the present committee agrees that this would be a welcome move in order to provide the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies with a more diverse academic home. The union among all languages in one single unit would generate more visibility and positive traction, harmonize the

treatment of continuing sessionals, and lessen the impact of future retirements or special periods such as the Pandemic of 2020. Collaboration among languages would also open up innovative curricular offerings, potentially generate increased donor funding for scholarships, and provide more opportunities for students.

2. Correct the imbalance between courses taught by regular faculty and Continuing Sessional Instructors and improve the conditions for contingent faculty in terms of salary and recognition. The Continuing Sessional Instructors at the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies are well-qualified and dedicated. However, the number of courses they teach and the overwhelming responsibility they carry - in 2020 60.6% of the EETS were created by Continuing Sessional Instructors - have kept them as 'academic factory workers', overused, partially marginalized and unable to engage with Research Faculty members as equals. The large number of EETS generated by Continuing Sessional Instructors points to serious mismanagement by the administration. The University of Victoria, which proclaims itself a research-intensive university, should carefully assess this EETS imbalance. If the majority of EETS are taught by contingent faculty, some of whom reported teaching 13 courses in 2020-2021, the review committee wonders how these over-extended instructors are able to support large numbers of students, especially with the growing number of students needing academic accommodations and facing mental health issues.

Related to the imbalance between courses taught by Continuing Sessional Instructors and courses taught by regular faculty, is the imbalance between the number of courses taught by Teaching Stream faculty and Research Stream faculty. Typically, Teaching Stream faculty comprise a small percentage of regular faculty in Faculty of Humanities' units. However, in the case of the Hispanic and Italian Studies Department, the two streams are nearly equal, with 2.75 FTE Teaching Stream faculty and 3.0 FTE Research Stream faculty. We recommend that the number of Research Stream faculty be increased to address this problem. The review committee also realizes that students in the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies rarely have the opportunity to take courses taught by Research Stream faculty.

3. We strongly encourage the department to create clear learning objectives for individual courses, for each program, and for the Department as a whole, and to post them on the Department's website.
4. Despite the clear statement on the part of the administration about the impossibility of new hires, the reviewers feel that after the dramatic contraction of faculty complement and the widespread elimination of programs, a moderate effort should be made to ensure the very possibility of a new creative course of action.

We propose the hire of a new junior faculty member in Hispanic and Indigenous Studies to strengthen research, curriculum, morale, and bring Indigenous representation to play a greater role within the department and the University's overall vision. This could also serve other programs and constitute a bridge between Hispanic Studies and Indigenous Studies, between Hispanic Studies and European Studies or between Hispanic Studies and Latin American Studies.

5. The review committee recommends the official reactivation of Italian with the offer of a minor in Italian Studies. The new Italian minor would include specific Italian language courses (stopping at 3rd year language instruction) plus culture courses with a focus on interdisciplinarity. The study abroad program in Recanati, which is still advertised on the UVic website, was well run and quite successful. Students who want to become proficient in the language should be encouraged to study

in Italy for one or two semesters. A rotation of language courses, a limited number of culture courses with the inclusion of a list of possible electives from programs such as Art History & Visual Studies, Music, and History, would make this minor easily doable, if the university invests in one new appointment (limited term or tenure track). Italian Studies lost two full time faculty members in 2018 and the program held on quite well if one considers that it lost only $\frac{1}{3}$ of its enrollment before its closure. However, the current situation, with one 100% appointment across two colleagues (one of whom also teaches Spanish courses) is insufficient to warrant the existence and well-being of even a minor. The committee recommends that the faculty member currently at .75%, who teaches both Italian and Spanish courses, is brought to a 100% appointment, with the appointment equally divided between Italian and Spanish. The committee perceived the existence of a toxic and dysfunctional situation at the time of the widespread retirement of faculty members in Italian and Hispanic Studies (and of the departure of the Chair to another department) and realizes that this had a negative effect on several faculty members and Continuing Sessional Instructors, including the Italian faculty member at .75%. For this reason, it suggests that a new limited contractual person or a tenure track faculty is hired in Italian with the task of coordinating the program and rebuilding a relationship of trust and collegiality. New courses, such as Italian Cinema, could then be offered on a regular basis within the department, while also ensuring linguistic instruction. The course "A Taste of Italy: Food as Culture" has been tremendously successful and it should become part of the Minor in Italian Studies. Should the minor be successful, after 3 to 5 years the joint major in Italian and Hispanic Studies or a major in Italian Studies could be resurrected. The students we met all regretted the elimination of the Italian program and said that they would take Italian courses, if offered.

A problematic issue identified by the committee within Italian Studies is also the .25% appointment of another faculty member in Italian. It is very difficult to engage in active participation and commitment to a unit with such a small percentage appointment and this should be addressed by the new Chair and Dean of Humanities. While the Minor in Italian Studies is reactivated, the program can also offer a certificate. With two 1.5, 100-level language courses (100A and 100B) at UVic and 7.5 units in Recanati, students could already receive the certificate and - for those who wish it - then transition to the Minor in Italian Studies.

6. Modify the program (Minor and Major) with a more interdisciplinary approach (i.e. Film Minor, Gender Studies, European Studies, Latin American Studies, Cultural, Social and Political Thought, Business School) and in line with the new University's strategy including Indigenous representation and Internationalization. This could also allow for the planning of a more organic, streamlined and structured trajectory of study at the curricular level. The Department should be encouraged and helped to foster collaborations with other programs. The new Chair and the Dean of Humanities are well positioned to provide consultation and guidance to the Department in this direction.
7. The international field school courses abroad to Cuenca (Ecuador) and Alcalá de Henares (Spain) in conjunction with the SIELE accreditation program are definitely on the right track as they are great assets of the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies. An exchange with Chile is in its early stages, and it should be pursued. The students indicated their wish of longer exchange programs beyond the three months currently available and a less strictly pre-determined transfer level, which is problematic especially for students in their upper years. The review committee invites the department to explore the possibility of establishing a dual partnership with the Universidad de Cuenca and/or the Universidad de Alcalá. A dual degree would be very appealing to students in the event that the MA in Hispanic Studies could be resumed.

8. Add more courses to be delivered in English in both Minor and Major. This will allow students to select the area they are most interested in and will likely result in an increased number of students deciding to declare a major in Spanish. Another solution would be the creation of a better defined two-streams program - a language stream and a culture stream. This would not undermine the language proficiency of the students taking the language stream. In the culture stream, courses with Latin American and Spanish content could be allowed from a list of restricted electives in English.
9. We recommend reactivating the MA program in Hispanic Studies and supporting some graduate students as TAs. This is especially important for their professional future. The 2014 report had already indicated that Teaching Assistants should have been offered teaching positions, especially in language instruction. They could also help grading and running small seminars.
10. After the imbalance between Research Stream faculty and Teaching Stream faculty has been addressed and resolved, and after the program has implemented successful collaborations with other programs, consider converting the Continuing Sessional Instructors positions to Teaching Stream faculty. The overworked Continuing Sessionals should be able to look forward to a better future for their continued effort and their steadfast loyalty to the Department. They have a lot to offer and a course load of 7 courses per semester would allow them to diversify their teaching and align it - at least partially - to their research interests, which can be well harmonized with the Department's and the University's strategic priorities.
11. Update the Department website to show the new Programs in ALL: Minor, Major, Honours, Certificate, and possibly micro-credentials offered at University of Victoria.