

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM
Department of Modern and Classical Languages

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Professor Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco, Xavier University
Professor Richard Kern, University of California, Berkeley
Professor Yoshiko Mori, Georgetown University

CAMPUS VISIT
October 12-14, 2016

The review team read the *Self Study* written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean and Associate Deans. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were also provided with a variety of materials about the College and the University.

1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee’s rating.

The committee gave the Department of Modern and Classical Languages (MCL) an overall rating of GOOD. Overall, the reviewers felt that both lower- and upper-division courses across MCL are of “good quality,” and that the department “is instrumental” in supporting students across the University at varying levels of foreign language study-- from those simply trying to fulfill USF requirements to those invested in more thorough international and cultural studies.

2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?

- a. Students are “very satisfied with their coursework,” “the personal attention they receive” from MCL faculty,” and their study abroad experiences; they report that “encouragement from instructors” is key in their decision to continue past USF’s language requirement into advanced study. However, low numbers of offerings for their languages of study and “uncertainties” regarding scheduling frustrate students.

- b. MCL programs suffer from low enrollments in upper division courses and low numbers of majors. The reviewers felt that “the constant threat of upper division course cancellations makes it difficult to offer a consistent program of study to students,” and “discourages students from continuing to pursue a major or minor due to a lack of stable offerings.”
- c. MCL curriculum is hampered by “procedural and instructional variability across [and within] languages.” Minimum enrollments vary, and so do the “time and quality of ‘conversation’ and ‘tutoring’ sessions.” Additionally, tutoring sessions are often “not required or weighted the same way,” and their quality depends on “the investment of the student tutor and instructor for the course.”
- d. Multiple area studies programs at USF “compete for essentially the same students.” The reviewers were surprised that “many students enrolled in these programs are [not enrolled in] majors or minors in languages related to their area studies.”
- e. It appeared to reviewers that “morale is not high” among MCL faculty, due to “low student enrollments, little sense of departmental change over time, and dissipated energy on unrewarding tasks.” The reviewers felt that the department’s federated model “creates obstacles to collaborative efforts and incites competition for departmental resources to meet competing goals.”
- f. The reviewers noted clear divisions between “lower-division language faculty and upper-division literature and culture faculty.” Additionally, “consistency of pedagogy” and “cooperation in the implementation of curricular models and implementation” differ between full-time faculty and adjuncts.
- g. The placement tests in MCL “may need to be redesigned and tailored to the proficiency-oriented curricula.” Students in MCL feel that the tests used for MCL were too grammar based, and “would not reflect” what they had previously learned, or might “place them inappropriately.” This sometimes results in self-placement into courses, and as a result, “inappropriate language instruction.”

3. What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?

Department Mission, Identity, and Visibility

- a. Develop a strong departmental mission and unique identity, to provide “belongingness for both faculty and students.”
- b. Clearly articulate “within the department and across the university” the goals of the USF language requirement. Ask “what does USF want students to learn from exposure to a new language and culture?”

- c. Ensure that “all majors (including languages)” appear on graduation programs, “not just ‘primary’ majors.”

Collaboration Beyond the MCL Department

- d. Hold meetings with related departments and programs at USF (i.e. Asian Studies, International Studies) to “discuss commonalities,” “seek a better way to share available resources,” and “provide mutual support.”
- e. Additionally, work with related departments and programs to “make it easier” for students to double major in language and area studies, “instead of [language and area studies] competing with each other.”

Department Structure

- f. Create multiple-year contract, full-time “instructor” positions, to “establish equitable structures for faculty employment” and to reduce the number of adjuncts.
- g. “Facilitate communication and collaboration between instructors of lower-level language courses and faculty who teach upper-level courses.”
- h. Make language placement tests mandatory for all incoming students who have previously studied a language.

Supporting MCL Enrollments

- i. Recognize and encourage language studies beyond the basic requirement as “essential to the overall Jesuit mission and to the development of global and intercultural competencies.” “
- j. Recruit incoming freshmen with AP/IB placement exam scores and encourage them to enroll in upper division language courses
- k. Use presentations and peer advisors to “strengthen visibility of the advantages of studying languages.”
- l. Tailor incoming student advising for more in-depth discussions of language study at USF.
- m. Set a uniform minimum enrollment across languages.

Curriculum and Instruction

- n. Continue to focus on the “bridge and movement” from lower division to upper division courses.
- o. Adjust departmental energy away from “outreach programs with little evidence [that they are] boosting enrollments,” and instead towards creating “interesting courses within MCL” that might “entice some students to continue beyond the language requirement threshold.”
- p. Rethink the tutoring program offered as part of the beginning language sequence, and consider technology-based models of tutoring as an alternative.
- q. Re-examine the learning goals and outcomes of language/major/minor programs and come up with “a systematic assessment plan.”

Resources and Priorities

- r. Concentrate resources on languages that “have a full portfolio of courses of a minor [and/or] major,” rather than “languages that are offered simply to complete language requirements.”

- s. Rethink the language requirement waiver option, “an unnecessary and counterproductive use of departmental resources” that “overburdens” the MCL chair, language coordinators, and administrative assistants.

4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University’s strategic initiatives?

Reviewers noted that the “expressed goal” of full-time faculty in Modern and Classical Languages is to provide students “top-notch language programs,” but they were “struck” that the department develops more than linguistic proficiency. The reviewers felt that MCL’s programs also develop “students’ understanding of how language, culture, identity, and thought interrelate in societies past and present” through “in-depth humanistic study of language, literature, and the arts.”

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

Reviewers felt that “research and teaching by MCL faculty underscore the importance of recognizing connectivity among world literatures and cultures.” Additionally, they felt that “in a university seeking to impart global perspectives, as indicated in the USF Vision Statement, investment [in MCL] is especially important and welcome.” Should the department develop “a unifying set of goals” that recognize “the importance of all the languages and cultures within it” and “intercultural dialogue,” it can “set an example for the rest of the university community.”

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee’s recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the full-time faculty of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and develop an *Action Plan* based on the *Self Study* and the *External Reviewers’ Report*. Based on the agreed upon *Action Plan*, the Office of the Provost can assist the program by allocating necessary resources to implement those actions.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

No additional information needed.