

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1. Review Summary

Programs Reviewed:	Italian, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major, Minor Italian Culture and Communication, BA (Hons): Minor Italian Studies, MA Italian Studies, PhD
Unit Reviewed:	Department of Italian Studies
Commissioning Officer:	Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professor Eugenio Bolongaro, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, McGill University 2. Professor Deborah Parker, Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, University of Virginia 3. Professor Deanna Shemek, Department of European Languages and Studies, University of California, Irvine 4. Professor Jane Tylus, Department of Italian Studies, Yale University
Date of Review Visit:	January 20-21, 2021
Date Reported to AP&P:	October 26, 2021

Previous UTQAP Review

Date: November 19-20, 2012

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Undergraduate students' satisfaction with courses

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Going beyond traditional categories and period boundaries in designing undergraduate courses to mobilize critical thinking and trans-historical inquiry

2. Graduate Programs

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Revising the graduate program curriculum to make it consistent with the interdisciplinary and comparative direction of the profession
- Addressing the ongoing challenge of securing consistently high quality graduate applicants in a competitive funding environment

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Innovative teaching
- International reputation of graduate academic staff
- Exceptional research resources

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- The spirit of collegiality and cooperation within the Department and across campuses
- Well-conceived renewal of the Department's language curriculum
- Unusual strength and engagement of both undergraduate and graduate student associations

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Systematically identifying learning outcomes in course syllabi and program objectives to strengthen already fine course offerings
- Engaging in strategic growth through new faculty hires and building linkages with other programs
- Establishing a strategic plan for the next five to ten years
- Finding ways to facilitate increased dialogue across disciplines and fields, working collaboratively with other units, centres and institutes to mutual benefit

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of reference; Self-study; Previous review report including the administrative response; Access to all course descriptions; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty.

Consultation Process

Dean, Vice-Dean Academic Planning, Associate Dean Unit-Level Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science; Chair, Department of Italian Studies; Associate Chairs, Undergraduate & Graduate; Faculty; Undergraduate and Graduate students; Administrative staff; Chairs of cognate units: Cinema Studies Institute, Department of French, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, & Centre for Medieval Studies.

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program(s)

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Objectives
 - ▶ ITA programs seek to expose students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to a variety of courses on Italian literature, culture, cinema, and linguistics; they teach analytical skills, a deep understanding of Italian culture, and broad contexts for understanding works studied
 - ▶ Amply documented departmental learning outcomes, including a curricular map; program learning outcomes align well with U of T's overall goals
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Undergraduate courses open to all with no prerequisites (except for those with language requirements) and no minimum GPA for program admission, consistent with current practice across North America
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Specialist program complemented by Minor in Italian, Culture and Communications Studies Minor in Italian, and Italian Major
 - ▶ Specialized topics courses require students to examine disciplinary formations, methodological approaches, and theoretical underpinnings that govern their learning
 - ▶ Department currently considering a reconfiguration of Minor programs
 - ▶ 'Italian Canadian Literature' an excellent example of a course that could appeal to students from Ontario's large Italian-Canadian population
 - ▶ Love in the Renaissance, stands out as a positive example of course offerings moving in more thematic/conceptual direction

- Innovation
 - ▶ Program offers opportunities for learning beyond the classroom through extracurricular activities, lectures and films
 - ▶ Innovative extracurricular opportunities also include growing number of internships in Toronto, and the UT Study Abroad programs in Italy; these are highly sought by students and will be key to programs' future success
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ Asian-Canadian, SE Asian and East Asian students make up roughly half of students enrolled in ITA language courses
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Student interviews and survey results indicate high quality instruction, dedicated faculty and high student satisfaction
 - ▶ Students praise the welcoming departmental atmosphere, that is conducive to learning and to generating enthusiasm for learning Italian
 - ▶ Students are very appreciative of opportunities for learning outside the classroom (although these have recently been impacted by the pandemic)
 - ▶ Some undergraduates report that graduate student instructors are passionate, effective and "relatable"

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Objectives
 - ▶ Since process of identifying learning outcomes in course syllabi is still underway, students are not yet experiencing full benefits
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ "Staggering" undergraduate enrolment decline in recent years
 - ▶ Changing demographics in Toronto (where Italian no longer offered in majority of high schools) has led to decline in Specialist enrolment, which was designed with secondary-school teachers in mind
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Curriculum has not been overhauled for more than 20 years
 - ▶ Students express desire for courses that offer more speaking opportunities
 - ▶ Students express interest in more courses on topical subjects
 - ▶ Majority of undergraduate courses are focused on literary works
 - ▶ Tenured faculty in FAS do not necessarily teach introductory courses in their disciplines
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ "Mixed" undergraduate assessment of graduate student instructors, with some reports of inconsistent information regarding assignments and poor communication

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Objectives
 - ▶ If recommended curricular revisions are implemented, a rethinking of program outcomes will be necessary

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ “[A] thorough review of course offerings in ITA is overdue”
 - ▶ “While the committee vigorously supports the Program’s commitment to historical breadth, we suggest that updating courses on historical materials could attract more students”
 - ▶ Consider designing courses to include specific occasions for conversation, and conversation-based assignments, particularly at 200 and 300 levels
 - ▶ Reviewers strongly encourage offering more courses with topical foci and drawing on other media
 - ▶ Integrate tenure-stream faculty with language teaching and/or lower-level culture courses to foster continuity and community for students moving through program levels
- Innovation
 - ▶ Continue to expand and develop internship and research opportunities; current plan to expand Italian-Canadian internship program beyond Italian community would attract greater range of stakeholders and potentially lead to still more opportunities for students
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ More effort should be made to appeal to Asian-Canadian, Southeast Asian and East Asian student population through course offerings
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Resume and expand extracurricular activities that give students opportunities to speak the language and build community

2. Graduate Program(s)

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Department offers internationally recognized graduate program with long and distinguished history
- Objectives
 - ▶ Department has done excellent job of making explicit the objectives of its graduate programs, learning outcomes and expectations, and methods for assessing student achievement
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Graduate student enrolment has remained fairly constant, though numbers are down slightly from 2016
 - ▶ MA and PhD requirements are designed for applicants who have completed UG major or MA in Italian Studies, respectively, which is consistent with department’s current historical coverage model
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Attractive 1-year Italian Studies MA program is unique in Canada

- ▶ Significant change has been made towards enhanced flexibility and cross-disciplinarity, by increasing number of grad courses that may be taken in other departments
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ High level of student satisfaction with quality of teaching in Department and the support from advisors
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Strong student performance in time-to-completion
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ Available figures show more than 50% of graduates employed in academic or teaching positions, and 40% in other fields
 - ▶ Of the graduates in academic/teaching positions, 16 hold positions at universities in Canada, the US or Italy; 2 teach in Ontario secondary education; those in other fields work for Ontario Civil Service, Italian Trade Commission, Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, and in publishing
 - ▶ Reviewers note that while the information available on postgraduate employment is not complete, “the picture one derives from these data is on balance positive”
- Student funding
 - ▶ Enviable level of internal funding available to graduate students

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Department has been slow to adapt to an evolving environment
- Objectives
 - ▶ Learning outcomes for MA are extremely broad and seem barely distinguishable from those of PhD
 - ▶ PhD learning outcomes are also framed in very broad terms and likely overambitious
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ As a result of converging trends, reviewers note that currently even the best applicants rarely possess level of specialization that traditional graduate programs have required for admission
 - ▶ Admission rates “perhaps a little high”, though this may be justified by department’s status as the only in Canada to offer a formal PhD in the field
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ PhD program’s coverage model focused on national tradition is no longer tailored to contemporary state of discipline, or current academic job market
 - ▶ Course work required for both MAs seems too heavy to be completed in a single year, especially given 90-hour teaching assistant contract as part of student funding package
 - ▶ 4-year term for PhD completion is unrealistic, and course load seems too demanding
 - ▶ Latin reading competency requirement is more related to outdated coverage model than to actual needs of PhD students
 - ▶ Many students expressed dissatisfaction with required methodology course (ITA1000H)

- ▶ Some graduate students indicated that additional work associated with Goggio Chair can be a burden, especially when course is perceived as unrelated to their research agendas
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Reviewers note that graduate student lapses in classroom practices may be largely due to inadequate pedagogical preparation
 - ▶ Reviewers note lack of support given to graduate students in becoming marketable professionals within and outside academic environment
 - ▶ Reviewers did not have opportunity to meet with current MA students and thus have no first-hand knowledge of their experience of program
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ Contemporary academic job market in Italian Studies is such that over last 9 years only 50-60% of PhD graduates have found teaching positions in academic setting

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Prioritize innovation, and develop creative alternative to coverage model that still informs presentation, structure and delivery of all grad programs
- Objectives
 - ▶ Reformulate graduate learning outcomes in tandem with restructuring of graduate curriculum and program delivery, with enhanced emphasis on elements such as problem-based learning and practicum
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Admission requirements for both graduate programs should be realigned as department makes updates to programs
 - ▶ Increase flexibility of admission requirements with greater focus on cross-disciplinary skills and competencies pertinent to students' areas of interest
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Department must find ways to creatively re-imagine the graduate curriculum to move in the direction taken by the Italian Studies discipline in recent years
 - ▶ Conduct thorough review of graduate curriculum with view to definitively abandoning coverage model for one more flexible, cross-disciplinary and topic driven, and consistent with current state of discipline and needs and aspirations of contemporary graduate students
 - ▶ Reduce number of courses for MA and PhD programs, to allow students to better balance study and teaching responsibilities
 - ▶ Re-examine viability of MA thesis option to ensure that it will be available only to students with very clear idea of their scholarly interests; MA thesis work should be given more weight in the curriculum
 - ▶ Revisit requirement for all students to achieve reading knowledge of Latin
 - ▶ Revise ITA 1000H curriculum in collaboration with graduate students; reconsider cogency of including pedagogical component in the course

- ▶ Find ways to integrate expectations for graduate students to take courses offered by the Goggio Chair into regular course load
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Rethink PhD general exam structure to be less burdensome, more flexible, and to address students' specific areas of interest and curricular lacunae
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Implement formal training of graduate students in language teaching and in pedagogy more generally
 - ▶ Department must find ways to assist PhD students in successfully transferring skills and competencies acquired to a non-academic career path
 - ▶ Implement activities (such as mentoring, workshops on resumé and CV preparation, grant proposal writing, creating a job portfolio, etc.) to train graduates how to best present themselves to range of potential employers

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Department boasts distinguished group of faculty at the top of their fields in terms of research productivity and professional leadership
 - ▶ “[U of T’s] Italian Studies faculty is unquestionably pulling its weight as a scholarly community”
- Research
 - ▶ Faculty remain highly visible in leadership roles in the discipline, from editing entire book series, to chairing of major professional organizations
 - ▶ Department faculty organize impressive number of conferences and direct and advise a high number of dissertations
 - ▶ Faculty productivity is remarkable, given Department’s diminishing FTEs
 - ▶ Department produces scholarship in drama, cinema, poetry, historical and applied linguistics, studies of the novel, political movements and other areas, effectively offering a rich array of curricular offerings
- Faculty
 - ▶ Still a good representation of chronological coverage in current configuration of tenure-stream faculty
 - ▶ Promising recent hires, including two tenure-stream faculty in areas recommended by previous external reviewers (medieval studies and cinema/media studies); another recent teaching stream hire has secondary specialization in gender and sexuality studies
 - ▶ New positions in global early modern Italian and race and transnational cultural studies will be vital to program’s efforts to increase cross-disciplinary collaborations
 - ▶ “The committee was immensely heartened by its conversations with the newest faculty, who all voiced energy, creativity, and hope in the future of Italian at UT. All of them seem poised for distinguished careers.”
 - ▶ One recent hire has begun to address the department’s gender imbalance

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ Several faculty in professional leadership roles are scheduled to retire soon
 - ▶ Reviewers note unusually high reliance on CLTA appointments in program delivery
 - ▶ “An important area the Department does not cover but that commands high visibility today, is contemporary theory and philosophy”
 - ▶ Department has no female full professors and no non-White faculty

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ A more diverse faculty (in terms of academic preparation and cultural background) would contribute to a greater variety of course offerings
 - ▶ Department urged to pay serious attention to diversity factors in hiring and programming, “while avoiding both tokenism and essentialism”
 - ▶ Consider options for CLTAs to “change streams,” as they become truly integral to the future directions of the Department
 - ▶ Consider additional hire in contemporary theory and philosophy, which could complement searches currently underway in globalism, and current faculty working in queer studies

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Goggio Chair and Iacobucci Centre are outstanding vehicles for cultivating relationships with vibrant cultural communities in Toronto and beyond
 - ▶ Contributions of UTM faculty are very important to graduate programs, summer instruction, and in some ways to Departmental administration
 - ▶ Positive connections with the Columbus Centre, Italian Cultural Institute, Toronto International Film Festival and Italian Contemporary Film Festival, as well as with local schools
 - ▶ Innovative and successful new postdoctoral program, and promising opportunities for agreements with European universities
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ ITA blessed with highly professional and efficient staff members who run department and attend to its financial needs; division of duties seems appropriate
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Reviewers commend FAS Dean’s commitment to supporting a distinguished future for ITA – visible in current recruitment efforts for two new tenure stream positions

- ▶ Department designing promising programming on Italian-Canadian culture including queer studies through the Iacobucci Center, with proposed subfield in cultural studies; “these are important, forward-looking developments”
- International comparators
 - ▶ Largest Italian program in North America that remains “a giant among its peers”, despite downward trend in humanities and European language enrolments since 2008; “Program remains a beacon of the field on both sides of the Atlantic (and beyond) and as such should be empowered to thrive”
 - ▶ Research records of the majority of faculty are impressive and on par with those of major Italian Studies departments elsewhere
 - ▶ PhD placements more or less consistent with those of other universities

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ “Morale has clearly been a problem in the department in recent years - and perhaps for longer”
 - ▶ “One of the more serious observations, which we heard several times, is that there was both systemic misogyny and racism in the Department.”
 - ▶ Increasing attraction of cross-appointments harbors danger of “burnout” and “exploitation of affected faculty”
 - ▶ Lack of strong, systematic relationships and affiliations with other units
 - ▶ Significant tension between graduate students who come to the Department from Italy and those who don’t, with the perception that Italian students are more highly valued and given privileged access to resources, opportunities (as well as program admission)
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Reported lack of “ideal” office space for graduate students, and relatively small common space
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Limited progress on addressing recommendations made in previous review, many of which are still very relevant
 - ▶ Programs’ emphasis on chronological coverage of three major periods of Italian literature (medieval/Renaissance, Baroque/Enlightenment and modern/contemporary) is overdue for re-examination
 - ▶ Department facing upcoming challenges around leadership succession, due to seniority gap in faculty complement and “culture of mistrust” among existing faculty
- International comparators
 - ▶ “Even as PhD applications and students enrolled in undergraduate courses... have declined elsewhere in North America...the drop at UT seems particularly precipitous – perhaps because it had much further to fall in the first place”

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Strengthen Goggio Chair and Iacobucci Centre, and extend their reach within the local community to increase Department's visibility and impact
 - ▶ Achieving a harmonious collaboration with UTM will be an important factor in the future of Italian at U of T
 - ▶ Implement formalized process of consultation between Chairs of cross-appointing units to ensure that faculty are not inequitably burdened
 - ▶ Department urged to strengthen relationships with cognate units, in particular with language and literature departments
 - ▶ Address tension between Italian and non-Italian students through open and frank discussion involving faculty and students
 - ▶ Enhance alumni and local community outreach; explore possibility of named chair through alumni funds
 - ▶ 2012 recommendation of a faculty retreat to plan future departmental directions remains pertinent, and should involve students and cognate units
 - ▶ Low departmental morale appears related to perceived lack of transparency; develop clear and public guidelines to address key governance mechanisms and decisions
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Faculty express desire that the leadership of committees and appointments to Graduate Chair and Undergraduate Chair rotate more regularly than they have in the past
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Reviewers stress importance of maintaining and revitalizing a flagship program in North American Italian Studies
 - ▶ Given enrolment decline, program must find ways to prosper on new scale, in new configurations
 - ▶ Reviewers strongly recommend addressing outstanding recommendations from previous review
 - ▶ A rigorous review of offerings is overdue; faculty possess a wealth of experience and expertise that could be mobilized for a thorough refreshment of course offerings
 - ▶ Reviewers note that department has been introducing more conceptually/ theme based courses, and strongly encourage them to continue moving in this promising direction
 - ▶ Department urged to think purposefully about training all tenure-stream faculty for leadership roles
 - ▶ It is essential that members of the leadership team "cooperate very closely with each other and conduct themselves in the most transparent manner possible"
 - ▶ "It is clear that ITA must emerge from this review process with a clear mission and a commitment to moving their curriculum, departmental governance, and mentoring of their large graduate community into the 21st century"
- International comparators
 - ▶ In future planning, look to other departmental models that approach materials through a variety of frameworks, balance focus on chronological coverage with broader variety of cultural courses, and draw on different disciplines and media



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

September 14, 2021

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

Re: UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Italian Studies

Dear Professor McCahan,

Along with the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Italian Studies, I am pleased with the external reviewers' assessment of the Department and its undergraduate and graduate programs: Italian Studies, H.B.A. (Specialist, Major, Minor); Italian Culture and Communication (Minor); Italian Studies (M.A., Ph.D). The reviewers noted the Department of Italian Studies as "a flagship program in North American Italian Studies."

The quality of the program notwithstanding, as per your letter dated May 27, 2021, the review report raises a number of issues and challenges. I am writing to address the areas of the review report that you identify as key. The responses to these items and implementation plan are separated into immediate- (six months), medium- (one to two years), and longer- (three to five years) term, along with who will take the lead in each area. Where appropriate, I have identified any necessary changes in organization, policy, or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them. The Dean's office has discussed the reviewers' comments through consultation with the Chair of the Department of Italian Studies to develop the following Implementation Plan incorporating the reviewers' recommendations.

Implementation Plan

The reviewers noted that little progress had been made on several key recommendations from the 2012 UTQAP review, including those regarding curriculum updates, adequate pedagogical training for graduate students, and diversity of the faculty complement.

Immediate-term response: The Department acknowledges the overall pace of change but is pleased to report that the rate of reform in the areas of curriculum updates, adequate pedagogical training for graduate students, and diversity of the faculty complement has accelerated in recent years. Furthermore, a number of initiatives have taken place in the interval between conducting the self-study and now, and more are on the horizon. These changes are listed in the relevant sections below.

Medium to Long-Term Response: The Dean’s office will actively monitor progress on the implementation plan through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as through the A&S Unit-Level Academic Planning process, which will begin after governance in the coming year. While part of the unit-level plan will specifically address progress on the UTQAP implementation plan, the five-year unit-level plan largely offers a direction for the Department in all areas including faculty complement, curricula, and EDI.

The reviewers strongly recommended updates to the undergraduate and graduate curricula, noting that the emphasis on chronological coverage and historical periodization at both levels is no longer consistent with the current state of the discipline.

- *Undergraduate: the reviewers observed that a review and update of the curriculum is overdue, and that “the current curriculum still shows little evidence of the 2012 external review’s recommendation to go ‘beyond traditional categories and period boundaries.’”*
- *Graduate: the reviewers strongly recommended a thorough review of the MA/PhD curriculum “with a view to definitively abandoning the coverage model in favor of a more flexible, cross-disciplinary and topic driven model”; they also recommended a concomitant realignment of admission requirements for these programs.*

Undergraduate

Immediate-term response: While the Department was initially slow to evolve its undergraduate curriculum beyond traditional boundaries, the pace of recent change has quickened. In the past two years, the Department has offered a number of new courses that are non-traditional, with invigorating interdisciplinarity that may attract new students to the Department’s programs. There were three new offerings in 2019-20 on topics ranging from food and culture to detective fiction and two more offered for the first time this year: “Sex and Gender in Contemporary Italy” and “Topics in: Black Italian Literature.”

Medium-term response: The Department will undertake a fulsome curricular review of its undergraduate programs. The Dean’s office will connect the Department with the Curriculum Development Specialist, based in the Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education, and support this curricular review with additional resources offered by the Teaching and Learning Office within the FAS Office of the Dean.

Medium-term to Longer-term response: The Dean’s office has connected the Department with the Faculty’s Experiential Learning and Outreach Office to expand its experiential learning opportunities and identify potential internship possibilities, as part of the Arts & Science Internship program.

Graduate

Immediate-term response: The Department convened extensive discussions on the issue of

curricular structure within the graduate programs during the past year and the faculty currently remain committed to the importance of a “coverage” approach as they recognize that it best serves graduates of their program who obtain academic jobs. The Department knows that, in many cases, its graduates teach in institutions with few Italian Studies faculty members and consequently are tasked with teaching across the language and culture curricula. That said, the content of that coverage is currently evolving alongside the Department’s graduate course offerings. One particular area of evolution is in language pedagogy (noted below).

Medium-to-Longer-term response: The Department will establish a committee to develop a curriculum in language pedagogy at the MA and the PhD levels and revisit the structure and flexibility of their graduate programs more generally. Related to this is a reassessment of the admission requirements for the graduate programs to reflect these curricular changes.

The reviewers commented that graduate students do not receive adequate pedagogical training prior to teaching undergraduate courses.

Immediate- to Medium-term response: At the institutional level, the level of paid training for graduate student course instructors and teaching assistants recently increased under the 2021-23 collective agreement. In addition to the six hours of mandatory paid job training offered by the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation (CTSI) to new TAs and Course Instructors, and four additional paid hours available to experienced TAs and CIs, the University will provide an additional two hours of paid work-related training. This increased attention to training is welcomed and supported by both the Faculty and the Department.

In the past year and a half, the Dean’s office has greatly expanded pedagogical support for online education. We established the Online Learning Academy, which provides peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring for instructors (including graduate student course instructors (GCIs)) seeking support with online teaching and learning methods. Through regular webinars and drop-in hours, a community of experienced instructors provides support for instructors on a range of topics, from best practices and (online) assessment design to technical support. The value of these practices and pedagogical advice apply to in-person and hybrid teaching delivery as well, hence the OLA is working to elevate teaching and learning standards in the Faculty more generally.

The Faculty’s Teaching and Learning Office also offers pedagogical consultations with Faculty Liaisons. The Office of Teaching & Learning will connect with the Department of Italian Studies to ensure that graduate student course instructors receive all available pedagogical support and to explore pedagogical training options for future graduate student instructors. The University’s Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, for example, offers specific supports for GCIs.

The Department sought to improve and enhance graduate student teaching training through a recent (2019-20) and thorough revision to ITA1000 “Methodologies for the Teaching and Study of Italian,” a mandatory course for MA and PhD students. Pedagogy receives greater attention in the revised course.

In 2020-21, under the supervision of the Department's Associate Chair Undergraduate, TAs were also given extensive training in producing pedagogical material for online teaching, including video lectures. The Department plans to continue providing this support following the return to in-person teaching as it provides invaluable experience in the use of new technologies in the classroom.

Medium-term response: The Department's committee reviewing language pedagogy programs at the graduate level (see above) will encompass pedagogical training among graduate students.

The reviewers recommended improving professional skills training for graduate students, to better prepare them for both academic and non-academic careers.

Immediate-term response: The Faculty offers professional skills training and support for doctoral students through its Milestones and Pathways program. To enhance the Pathways arm of the program, which provides students with professional skills and introduces students to the array of non-academic opportunities available in a given discipline, the Coordinator, Graduate Student Professional Development, will work with the Department of Italian Studies to develop a tailored "Pathways for PhDs" workshop, in which doctoral candidates explore and develop job materials for non-academic careers. These materials draw on Italian Studies alumni job placement experiences in order to explore possible career paths in this discipline.

The Director of Graduate Writing Support also offers unit-based writing instruction and support (an important professional skill in most occupations), in addition to broader sectoral workshops. For example, the Director is running a grant proposal writing workshop for students in Italian Studies in September. Workshops on cover letters and CVs are also offered.

The Faculty's programs supplement the many resources provided by the School of Graduate Studies (such as the SGS summer institute, which offers an intensive professional development program). We will work to ensure that the Department is aware of all opportunities for student professional development.

Medium to Longer term response: In addition to accessing Faculty and University resources (as above), the Department is expanding support for students that will enhance their job-readiness through the development of new research fellowships for an undergraduate and graduate student, as well as a series of paid fellowships for students undertaking fieldwork. The Department will also consult with Italian Studies departments in Canada and beyond our borders to investigate the possibility of developing a larger database of career outcomes for graduates of these programs and to develop resources concerning successful strategies to prepare graduate students for non-academic careers. The Faculty will offer support and guidance as needed. Financial support for related unit-specific initiatives, for example, is available to units through the Milestones and Pathways program.

The reviewers observed the lack of any female full professors, as well as the absence of any non-White faculty members, and strongly recommended that the diversity of the faculty

complement be considered in future hiring.

Immediate-term response: The Department is actively seeking to address historic homogeneity in its faculty complement by following current best-practices guidelines for diverse and inclusive recruitment. All members of the search committee are now required to complete unconscious-bias training, for example.

This attention to inclusive hiring has already led to improved diversity, as a higher proportion of recent hires have been female. In fact, two of the last three continuing appointments were women and the most recent hire is also a person of colour. Today, three of the six people with continuing appointments in the Department are women. It will take time to diversify the Department's complement across the ranks, because of its historic male dominance. See below for EDI initiatives within the Faculty that will further support diversity within the Department.

The reviewers recommended ways to ensure sufficient leadership in this area.

Immediate-term response: The Faculty of Arts and Science, alongside the University, is strongly committed to expanding diversity in our faculty complement, through active promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of faculty. Indeed, enhancing EDI is one of the Faculty's priorities in our recently released five-year academic plan (2020-25).

We are advancing towards greater equity and diversity in a number of dimensions, drawing on and guided by the mandate created by the Anti-Black Racism Task Force recommendations accepted by the University in March of 2021. For instance, in order to ensure that chairs and directors are aware of our EDI goals, strategies to achieve them (such as best practices in recruitment), and the Provostial funding opportunities available for recruitment of Black and Indigenous faculty, the Vice-Dean, Faculty, Academic Life and Equity, gave several presentations on these topics in 2020-21 to chairs and directors. In the past year, units in the Faculty have been more active and successful in recruiting Black and Indigenous faculty. Additionally, Dean's representatives on search committees received enhanced EDI training to ensure that unconscious bias is minimized, and best practices are followed throughout the recruitment and hiring process.

Medium-term response: The Dean's Office will continue to implement the recommendations of the Anti-Black Racism Task Force. For example, the Faculty of Arts and Science is conducting a search for a senior lead on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. In the coming year, senior leadership within the Faculty will work with the EDI Standing Committee, which includes broad representation from across the Faculty, to review and recommend modifications to policies and procedures to facilitate progress through the ranks for underrepresented faculty.

Furthermore, as a new component of the annual activity report, chairs and directors are now evaluated on their progress in enhancing EDI within their unit.

The reviewers observed significant problems with Departmental morale and culture, stemming from a variety of internal and external factors, with graduate students in particular commenting on a “lack of trust and transparency” and “systemic misogyny and racism in the Department.”

Immediate-term response: Addressing these concerns is a priority for the Department and the Dean’s office. To that end, the Department recently undertook (in 2021) a comprehensive Workplace Culture and Climate review under the direction and guidance of the Director, High Risk, Faculty Support & Mental Health in the Faculty of Arts & Science. This consultative process yields a set of recommendations that are designed to improve the cultural health of the Department.

In addition to the Review, the Department also appointed an inaugural EDI committee in 2020. The committee developed its mandate, which was approved by the Department in 2021.

Medium-to-Longer term response: The Department Chair will undertake the process of implementing the recommendations of the Climate review. The Dean’s Office will support and monitor progress on the implementation plan.

The reviewers noted comments from both faculty and graduate students regarding perceptions of apparent preferential treatment of graduate students from Italy.

Immediate- to medium-term response: The Department will address this issue in the Workplace Climate Implementation Plan, which, as noted above, the Faculty will monitor and support.

The reviewers urged the Department to pursue and strengthen systematic relationships and affiliations with other units within the University, in the form of shared faculty appointments and joint courses; they also made recommendations to strengthen the Department’s impact and visibility within the local community.

Immediate-term response: The Faculty and Department strongly support expanding and strengthening interdisciplinary relationships within the University and the local community. Indeed, jointly held appointments are now much more common in the Faculty. This evolution is reflected in the Italian Studies Department, as its most recent tenure-stream hires are all cross-appointed.

The Department is also currently working on expanding its set of cross-listed courses with, for example, the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, Equity Studies, Women and Gender Studies, as well as several courses that are electives for Renaissance Studies and European Studies.

Medium-term response: The Department will continue to develop joint courses, focusing on units with cross-appointed faculty, in order to broaden the reach of its courses and faculty

beyond Italian Studies.

To broaden their visibility within the local community, the Department will continue to strengthen its connections to the Frank Iacobucci Centre for Italian Canadian Studies, whose mandate is to “promote awareness, understanding and research on the Italian Canadian community.” The new fellowships and future plans for internships, noted above, speak to the Department’s renewed commitment to strengthen community engagement.

The Dean’s office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S Unit-Level Academic Planning process. A brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the January 20-21, 2021 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared.

The year of the next review will be no later than the 2028-29 review cycle.

To conclude, we appreciate that the external reviewers identified the Department of Italian Studies’ strengths and noted areas for development. The Department has already begun to move forward with plans to address the recommendations as presented by the reviewers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Woodin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melanie Woodin
Dean and Professor of Cell and Systems Biology

cc.

Luca Somigli, Chair, Department of Italian Studies, Faculty of Arts & Science
Gillian Hamilton, Acting Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science
Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

3. Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the summary accurately covered the full review, and that the administrative response fully addressed the issues identified.

The reading group encouraged the Department to continue to address concerns regarding departmental culture, faculty composition, and EDI while keeping the long-term health of the program in mind.

Professor Luca Somigli, Chair of the Department of Italian Studies, responded by emphasizing the importance of addressing concerns of departmental culture and EDI, noting that the Department was working closely with the Office of High Risk, Faculty Support and Mental Health, to provide workshops with faculty and students to address issues that were raised in the report.

No follow-up report was requested.

4. Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers noted that Italian Studies at U of T is the largest Italian program in North America and “a beacon of the field on both sides of the Atlantic (and beyond)”; they commended FAS’ commitment to supporting a distinguished future for the department; the innovative and popular opportunities for learning beyond the classroom; the enviable level of internal funding available to graduate students; the distinguished group of faculty at the top of their fields, and energetic, creative and optimistic new faculty; they highlighted the important contributions of UTM faculty; and finally the promising Italian-Canadian programming currently in development, including queer studies and a proposed subfield in cultural studies. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: prioritizing progress on key recommendations from the 2012 UTQAP review; making significant and overdue updates to the undergraduate and graduate curricula; ensuring graduate students receive adequate pedagogical training prior to teaching undergraduate courses; improving professional skills training for graduate students; carefully considering the diversity of the faculty complement in future hiring; addressing significant problems with departmental morale and culture; addressing faculty and student perceptions of apparent preferential treatment of graduate students from Italy; and finally strengthening systematic relationships and affiliations with other units within the University, as well as the department’s impact and visibility within the local community. The Dean’s Administrative Response describes the Faculty, unit and programs’ responses to the reviewers’ recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

5. Monitoring and Date of Next Review

The Dean’s office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S Unit-Level Academic Planning process. A brief

report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the January 20-21, 2021 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared.

The year of the next review will be no later than the 2028-29 review cycle.

6. Distribution

On January 15, 2022, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to the Chair of the Department.