Program Review Committee Report  
Department of German, Russian and East Asian Languages  

Review Process  

The Department of German, Russian and East Asian Languages (GREAL) prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. A two-person external review team visited the campus. They met with members of the Program Review Committee (PRC), GREAL faculty members, and university administrators. The PRC reviewed the self-study, the report of the external review team, met with faculty from the Department and discussed the Department with the Dean of Arts & Sciences. The findings and recommendations of the PRC are summarized below.  

Self-Study  

Mission and History  

The Department has a well-developed and articulated mission, which is summarized: “The department’s liberal arts mission, pre-professional and graduate training functions, and varied service demand commitment to scholarship in the humanities, advancement of learning, and civic involvement on the part of faculty members and students.” (Self-study, p. 9)  

The Department was originally a part of the Foreign Language Department. That department, which included French, German, Latin and Spanish, was one of five that made up the original College of Liberal Arts in 1935. In 1961, Russian was added and the department was split into two, with German and Russian in one department and French, Spanish and Latin in the other. Japanese was added in 1977 and Chinese in 1980. Arabic was offered on occasion in the 1980s and ‘90s.  

Foreign languages are not generally popular as a course of study and Bowling Green is no exception. At this time, students entering BGSU are required to have at least two years of high school language. Most students completing a degree in the College of Arts and Sciences are required to attain competency through the 202 level. Students not achieving this in high school are expected to complete the requirement as a part of their studies (group II requirement). Some culture courses may also be used to satisfy group V (arts and humanities) requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences. The international perspectives general education requirements can also be met with 202 language courses; the
202 level language courses account for about 20% of the demand in undergraduate language courses.

**Description of the GREAL programs**

The Department is primarily responsible for four languages: Chinese, German, Japanese and Russian. Chinese classes through CHIN 300 plus one elective are offered. Additional individual classes in Chinese are also available. Japanese classes through JAPN 302 plus one elective are offered. Chinese and Japanese are an integral parts of the Asian Studies Program. German has an undergraduate major and an MA. Russian has an undergraduate major. In addition, there are study abroad programs in China (Xi’an), Austria (Salzburg), Japan (a variety of schools in conjunction with Asian Studies) and Russia (St. Petersburg, summer, individualized semester). The German MA is a two-year program with students spending the first year in Salzburg and the second at Bowling Green. The self-study describes this as a unique MA program. Some MA students opt for a dual-degree program.

The Department’s programs have links to Asian Studies, Film Studies, International Business and International Studies.

**Faculty Resources**

Because it is unlikely that faculty in one language can switch to another, faculty are reviewed within language areas. At the time the self-study was written, there were five faculty in German (plus one on SRP), two in Russian, one (an instructor) in Chinese and one in Japanese. Over the past seven years, the number of German faculty has remained stable; the number of Russian faculty has decreased by more than one since the beginning of the decade, and effectively one and a half since a Russian faculty member became chair in 1998; the Chinese faculty has increased to one; and the Japanese faculty has remained constant at one. German is hiring this year for a new tenure track position. The number of faculty is satisfactory; however, there is a need for someone in Japanese where enrollments are relatively robust. In addition to teaching, the German faculty also oversee the annual year abroad program in Salzburg. This requires one faculty to be in Salzburg each year.

**Graduate Assistants and Staff Resources**

The MA program in German relies on graduate assistantships for support. Approximately 13 assistantships were available last year for the MA in German and three more for the joint MA with Political Science. There is occasionally money from Austrian sources and University endowment funds for non-U.S. graduate students. The staff consists of one full-time secretarial position; the current occupant has been very successful in the position. There is also a nine-month secretarial position supporting the Austria year abroad program. The director of the language laboratory is directly responsible to the chairs of GREAL and Romance Languages, jointly.
Physical Resources

The Department offices are in Shatzel Hall where a reading room, a library and dedicated classroom are also located. This space is adequate to meet current needs. The language laboratory (for all languages) is in University Hall and is in extremely bad repair, which discourages student use. The Japanese program also has access to the Nakamoto Room in Offenhauer West.

Financial Resources

Expenditures from the operating budget for 1999-2000, as reported by Institutional Research, were $98,399. (This figure, unlike that reported for other years, includes funding for the Salzburg Academic Year Abroad.) In 1997-98, expenditures were reported at $30,072 and in 98-99 they were $27,714. The self-study characterizes its operating budgets as insufficient, except for the summer and semester abroad budgets, which are adequate. In addition, there is almost no Foundation support nor is there a balance in the research overhead account.

Students Served

In fall, 2000, ten students majored in German and thirteen majored in Russian. There are no majors offered in Chinese or Japanese. The number of students majoring in German and Russian is small, although it compares favorably with national trends. However, enrollments in German have been on a downward trend, which accounts for the reduction in German faculty over the past few years. From 1996-99, the average number of degrees awarded per year was six at the bachelor’s level and 14 at the Master’s level. In fall, 2000, the Department produced 1056 SCH at the undergraduate level and 1222 SCH at the graduate level. At 10.36, the SCH/FTE is well below the average for the College of Arts & Sciences (21.06).

Assessment

Because foreign language associations generally have established named levels of performance, the Department decided to base assessment of language learning on ACTFL proficiency tests. The self-study claims, however, that trained assessors are needed to see what levels of competence the students have achieved. Evidence on student achievement of learning outcomes was not presented in the self-study. Assessments of learning outcomes other than oral proficiency in a foreign language have not been undertaken.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths. At the undergraduate level, German and Russian have a strong language core in addition to culture and literature based upper level courses. Faculty commitment – to extracurricular activities, study abroad and interdisciplinary studies – is first to undergraduate education. The self-study identifies its programs in German as strengths, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Department also has unusually strong Asian language
programs. All of these have affordable study abroad opportunities. The self-study identifies its most obvious strength as its relatively large and unusual MA program in German, compared to other terminal M.A. German programs. This program is built around a year study in Salzburg with continuing work at BGSU. The program often culminates in a dual degree. The Department also works to develop and maintain interaction with other programs and units (Asian Studies, Film Studies, Education and Human Development, International Programs, and Romance Languages, among others). Finally, the faculty are active and engaged. They are deeply committed to language education and work hard to support and extend this mission.

Weaknesses. One problem that all language departments face is that their programs are small and therefore relatively expensive. There has been a declining enrollment in German (reflecting national trends). It is not clear what the future of language education will be, but opportunities to make use of Web- or computer-based language support have not been fully pursued. In part this is due to the fact that the language laboratory is old, neglected and in very poor condition.

For a variety of reasons, and though uneven across the Department, publication in refereed journals has not been a strength.

Seven-Year Plan

The Department has an extensive plan with both long-term and short-term goals. The plan includes:

Curricular and Teaching Short-term Goals

- Establish a graduate certificate program for the AYA Austria internship experience.
- Determine the role of culture and translation classes in German and Russian in the major and adjust the curriculum accordingly.
- Determine the meaning of “studies” and interdisciplinary programs and adjust the curriculum accordingly.
- Seek closer cooperation with the Department of English and the Department of Popular Culture, where literature interests overlap.
- Close the loop on assessment. Assessment is beginning, but the need is to take findings and turn them into adjustments in the curriculum or professorial practice.
- Develop teaching mentoring for probationary faculty.

Curricular and Teaching Long-term Goals

- Establish minors in Chinese and Japanese.
- Increase internship opportunities for undergraduates.
- Develop cooperation on select courses with colleagues in other humanities disciplines.
- Propose to the Department of Romance Languages ways to economize and improve graduate student teaching assistant preparation.
• Establish Chinese and Russian connections to MA programs outside of the Department.

**Student Recruiting Goals**

• Increase the number of students minoring in German and Russian (no plan for this is given in the self-study).
• Increase the number International Business students (and others) in language classes.
• Increase the number of general education offerings by one each semester.
• Receive at least 30 applications per year for the German MA, accept 12 graduate students and 20 undergraduate to the AYA.
• Refine Web presence.

**Scholarship Goals**

• Increase the rate of publications to one per faculty per year.
• Improve research mentoring for probationary faculty.
• Provide two-two (rather than two-three) teaching loads for probationary faculty in their first two years.
• Increase applications for external funding.

**Personnel Goals**

• Modify retention plans for probationary faculty.
• Establish teaching mentoring for probationary faculty.
• Support individual development leaves.
• Seek joint appointment with Asian Studies.
• Open tenure track positions in Japanese, Chinese and Russian.
• Support promotion for associates to full professor.

**Financial Resource Goals**

• Increase Shllaku Scholarship Fund.
• Maintain external grant application rate.
• Continue pressing for an improved language lab.
• Cooperate with other units to develop a residential learning community

**Results of Previous Reviews**

This is the first cycle of program review for the Department of German, Russian, and East Asian Languages.

**Summary of the External Report**

The external reviewers cite a number of strengths for the Department. First, they see strong faculty commitment to programs and mission. They also see a faculty with background and experience in language learning. Study abroad opportunities are integrated with on-campus language and culture studies. The
Provost and the College of Arts and Sciences strongly support study abroad. The external reviewers feel that faculty have worked hard on assessment. The MA program in German is unique. The faculty are passionate about research and the German writer in residence program is a wonderful resource. The Department provides a substantial amount of service to the community; the effort to provide distance learning in Chinese, Japanese and Russian is excellent.

These strengths do not come without costs. The external reviewers feel that the faculty are overextended. Facilities, while generally good, are abysmal for the language laboratory: this must be fixed. The reviewers also suggested that BGSU would do well to increase the language requirements. The reviewers also suggest that BGSU faculty need more training in oral proficiency testing. And finally, the reviewers heard from graduate students that additional offerings would be desirable.

The external reviewers made the following recommendations:

1. Provide faculty with reassigned time and other support to improve assessment efforts.
2. The Department’s plans may be too ambitious and may need to be scaled back.
3. The external reviewers commented that in order for the Department to meet its goal of increasing the application pool and becoming more selective in admissions to the excellent MA program, the Department will need more systematic advertising of the MA program across the United States.
4. To maintain the quality of the MA, it may be necessary to recruit students for the dual-degree programs, but a focus will be necessary.
5. Reassigned time is needed to support research.
6. Faculty, especially in German, feel under pressure to recruit and retain students. Other activities are beginning to die out. Faculty are under stress. Relief must be provided.
7. The Department could benefit from added interaction with other departments, but it does not have the resources to do so.
8. A language house (possibly a learning community) would be desirable.
9. Computer support should be improved.
10. A modern language learning center is an absolute necessity.

**Program Review Committee Findings**

The PRC was impressed with the Department’s work ethic and commitment to providing quality education. The Department’s mission statement provides a deep and careful statement of the value and importance of a liberal education; it could serve as a model for others. The faculty are dedicated to their students and provide outreach to constituencies across campus and around northwest Ohio (e.g., Daimler-Chrysler, International Film Series and a Japanese telecourse to a Toledo high school). They are energetic and persistent. Faculty have undertaken a substantial number of initiatives that have had positive impacts around campus (e.g., International Film Series, Austria Week, Oktoberfest, and connections to the Film Studies Program, the Department of History, and Women’s Studies Program). These good works should not go unnoticed.
The PRC finds that the Department should build on strength within existing language programs, rather than dilute its efforts over too large a number of languages. At the same time, we are aware of the need to maintain flexibility in language offerings in order to be responsive to developing opportunities and changing needs of university constituent populations. Within limits, then, we find that the Department should develop those languages that contribute broadly to university international interests and programs, and avoid the addition of new language programs that do not connect with established strengths. For example, Japanese is a model of an area that the Department could focus on. There is evident demand for Japanese language. Japanese language instruction supports the valuable Asian Studies Program and there is opportunity to develop both outreach and academic distinction through continued focus in this area. Other language areas may offer one or two similar opportunities for growth, but in the absence of several mutually supporting opportunities, the development of new language areas should not be pursued.

The PRC believes that the issue of faculty morale raised by the external reviewers is connected to the issue of focus, introduced above. The PRC finds that the Department is attempting a large number of initiatives. We applaud these efforts, but believe they should be treated as exploratory. That is, those efforts that do not yield a significant positive return should be abandoned. Neither the Department nor the College can afford to maintain a large number of small initiatives. Thus, the faculty may have come to feel unappreciated when there are not resources to continue initiatives at a small scale. The Department must take seriously the limitations imposed by small budgets and small enrollments. Faculty can best do this by prioritizing their many undertakings, and putting their efforts behind those few that produce the greatest return; such a distribution of effort is most likely to be supported by the College and result in satisfaction for faculty members.

The PRC finds that the priorities for GREAL’s seven-year plan are not clearly delineated, and it is not clear how some of the activities can be accomplished without added resources. The following are items from the plan that could have substantial resource cost where the bearer of the cost is not clearly delineated: establish minors in Chinese and Japanese; increase internship opportunities for undergraduates; increase the number of minors in German and Russian; increase the number of general education offerings by one each semester; provide two-two teaching loads for probationary faculty in the first two years; and cooperate with other units to develop a residential learning community. Given that the Department sees itself as overburdened without these additions, a question clearly arises about how these new initiatives will be supported.

The PRC notes that the number of majors in German and Russian is small; furthermore, enrollments on a department-wide basis are not large, even though they compare favorably with enrollments in language departments in larger universities. The PRC believes that a fundamental condition for attracting students is a high quality program. Therefore, GREAL must continue to monitor the effectiveness of its curriculum in providing the quality of education they espouse.
in their mission statement. The Department appears well aware of the importance of enrollments in its service courses, upper division courses and graduate courses; the PRC encourages the Department to continue to be responsive to needs of these university populations.

The Dean of Arts & Sciences informed the PRC of his plans in the area International Studies. Many of these will impact GREAL (as well as the Department of Romance Languages and area studies), and so are relevant to this report. In particular, the PRC strongly supports plans to place an International Studies office (staffed with a half-time secretary) in physical proximity to the language departments, and to house Asian Studies and Africana Studies nearby as well. Such a physical arrangement will have a positive impact on all the programs involved, including the language departments. The PRC sees this as a low-cost effort with many benefits, and so supports it strongly.

The PRC is also supportive of the creation of an International Programs Council, in which the language departments would participate alongside the areas studies programs, International Business and the International Programs office. Such a Council will help the language departments contribute to a variety of international efforts, to attain a position of greater visibility and to impact other university programs.

The PRC finds the MA program to be strong and distinctive. We encourage the Department to continue to nurture this program in creative ways. We find that the vigorous graduate program provides an excellent connection to and support for faculty research efforts. There may be some student concern about the number of course offerings. Perhaps engaging second-year graduate students in more focused research activity (as opposed to coursework) would strengthen both the students’ training and the faculty’s opportunities to attend to research. However, the PRC also finds that the number of graduate assistantships awarded in support of this program (and support of study abroad) comprises an unusually large commitment. We know of at least one Ph.D. program, by way of comparison, that does not enjoy this level of support. The PRC believes that continued support to the Department’s graduate program should carry with it a heightened expectation for research productivity.

The PRC finds that the balance between teaching, research and service may overemphasize service and underemphasize research. The PRC finds that the research output is uneven in the Department and that greater emphasis should be placed on publication of refereed journal articles.

The self-study and the external review make the point that the MA program in German is unique. The PRC finds it may be the case that the program’s unique status is achieved because other universities cannot afford a similar investment in graduate student assistantships and study abroad. Given the expense, the PRC believes we should expect this program to be one of the premier programs at BGSU.

The PRC finds that the language lab is a significant detriment to the success
of the language programs and the various other programs that depend on language education, including areas studies, international studies and international business. It is difficult to state the level of disrepair and inadequacy of the facility without appearing to resort to hyperbole. The PRC believes that a concerted effort should be undertaken to explore modern Web-based alternatives to the current language lab. The faculty have a responsibility in this regard to educate themselves regarding the use of modern technology for language education. Based upon careful exploration of alternatives, the College and University should commit to the creation of a modern language-learning facility. The creation of a new language-learning facility is critical to the success of language education, international studies, area studies, study abroad programs and other interests of the University. Such a lab may even provide a venue for providing instruction in low-demand languages.

The PRC finds that the Department has not “closed the loop” on assessment. The literature on assessment is very clear that assessment is cyclic: establish learning outcomes; assess student achievement of those outcomes; evaluate programmatic success of the curriculum, pedagogy and overall learning environment; and make changes (in any of the above) that are likely to improve the students’ achievement of the stated outcomes. The PRC finds that the Department has begun the assessment cycle. They have student learning outcomes in every language (except Chinese) for listening, reading, writing and speaking. Other outcomes are stated on a course by course basis. At the time of the self-study, they had program level (except for Chinese) outcomes in draft form based in part on ACTFL standards. The PRC found no evidence that the Department has responded to information about student learning of languages with corrective programmatic or pedagogical innovation.

The PRC finds that the Department has developed an innovative distance education opportunity for a Toledo high school. This program has potential for recruitment for BGSU in general and for language majors in particular.

Program Review Committee Recommendations

1. The PRC recommends that the Department prioritize the actions to be taken within its seven-year plan, identify those that require resources and determine if those activities can be supported with existing resources. Specifically, the Department should review the number and depth of commitment to its several programs and focus its efforts only on those most productive ones. The Department should obtain the Dean’s approval of its plans for focus by the end of fall semester, 2001.

2. The PRC recommends that the College closely re-examine the resource commitment necessary to support the MA program in German. We believe the resource commitment should be proportional to stated goals for program quality and research productivity. We recommend that the College’s review proceed in parallel with the Department’s efforts to define areas of focus, as in recommendation 1.
3. The PRC recommends that an additional instructor or assistant professor be hired in Japanese, if this area remains part of the defined focus. In parallel, we recommend caution regarding development of new language areas.

4. The Dean of Arts & Sciences should appoint and charge a committee to investigate alternative technological approaches to the language-lab. Representatives from the Departments of GREAL, Romance Languages and Teaching and Learning in EDHD should serve on this committee. The committee charge should include, at least, a close look at Web-based language instruction and consultation with experts in the technology of language learning. The committee’s task will include some amount of faculty development, so that faculty become conversant with the various technologies for language instruction now available. The committee should make its recommendation to the Dean of Arts & Sciences by the end of fall semester, 2001. The Dean should engage the Provost and the Development Office in a discussion of funding of the proposed facility.

5. The Department should implement a differential teaching load policy, so that tenured faculty who choose not to be active in scholarship are assigned a full teaching load of four classes per semester. The PRC believes that faculty in the Department should be encouraged to meet their research commitment without added resources. The policy should be in place by fall, 2002.

6. The Department must make a significant effort in all aspects of the assessment cycle. Reevaluate the learning outcomes and modify them if they are difficult to assess or if they are inadequate statements of desired outcomes; implement an assessment program designed to provide useable information about students’ achievement of the stated outcomes; make inferences about programmatic strengths and weaknesses based on students’ performance; and make programmatic changes designed to improve student outcomes. To the degree that the Department improves student success – as evidenced by program-level assessment - in the learning of foreign languages, literature, culture and history, the Department will be in a better position to make the case that the languages contribute in a meaningful way to the University mission. An invigorated effort in assessment should be evident in the Department’s annual report to SAAC, spring, 2002.

7. The German faculty should review the second year curriculum for the MA program. We recommend that this review investigate ways to integrate coursework and research so that students gain an improved learning experience. This review could be undertaken in AY 2002-03.

8. The Department should participate vigorously in the International Programs Council, when it is formed. The Department should find ways to promote international education in a variety of venues.

9. The PRC recommends that the Department, the College of Arts & Sciences and Continuing Education, International and Summer Programs cooperate in responding to the distance education possibilities for Russian, Japanese and
Chinese at high schools and community colleges in Northwest Ohio. The choice of languages and the time this additional work would require must be considered in light of other departmental priorities. However, the Department is the only department in this part of the state that supports these languages. Also, BGSU has the technology to deliver these services. Efforts in this direction might strengthen and improve recruitment of students to the University and to language and area studies in particular.

*The Department of GREAL should report annually to the Dean of Arts & Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.*