

# Latin American Studies Program Review

Faculty of Social, Cultural & Media Studies

---

## Dean's Summary

---

Submitted by:

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean, College of Arts

---

Accepted by:

Senate in September 2020

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in June 2020

---

---

## APPC MEMORANDUM

APPC Chair: James Mandigo  
APPC Assistant: Melinda Saretzky

---

**TO:** Dr. Joanne MacLean, Chair, Senate

**FROM:** Dr. James Mandigo, Chair, Academic Planning and Priorities Committee

**DATE:** June 22, 2020

**RE:** Latin American Studies Program Review

---

The Latin American Studies (LAS) Program underwent a program review in 2018-2019. The Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (APPC) reviewed all of the documentation related to the program review and accepted them at the June 17, 2020 meeting. Attached is the Dean's Summary Report for Senate approval.

The LAS program has a deep history at UFV starting in 1981 when the first courses were offered. It then led to the International Studies diploma, minor and extended minor in LAS, Associate of Arts degree in International and Development Studies, Proficiency Certificates in Spanish, and most recently a minor in Spanish Language and Culture. The LAS program is multidisciplinary with courses offered in the following disciplines; Sociology, Global Development Studies, History, and Anthropology.

The external reviewers noted that they were pleased with the program outcomes and objectives and are satisfied with student interest.

**SUGGESTED MOTION:**

THAT Senate accept the Dean's Summary Report of the Latin American Studies program review as presented.

Dean's Summary of the Latin American Studies (LAS) Program Review , May 2019

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, June 2020

LAS is situated in the College of Arts within the Department of Social Cultural and Media Studies (SCMS). This review provided an opportunity to reflect on whether or not the LAS programs are best situated in SCMS, particularly in light of the fact that, as expressed in the dean's scope letter, "it has not led to any growth or evident long-term vision for LAS." The dean asked the reviewers and curriculum committee to consider what connections could be fostered and to think about a long-term personnel plan for LAS. The curriculum committee was asked to consider how to build partnerships with Indigenous communities, to indigenize its curriculum and to ensure recruitment and retention of Indigenous students. The committee was asked to comment on enrolment trends and ideas of how to build a network and culture for LAS students. Most importantly, the committee was asked to complete the mapping of courses and program outcomes. It was also asked to assess the status of its own program membership, given the challenge of interdisciplinary programs, as well as experiential learning opportunities for students. Finally, the committee was asked to consider how LAS faculty integrate research into teaching and what can be done to strengthen and promote links between all faculty members' teaching and scholarship.

Latin American Studies has a long history at UFV with courses having been offered since 1981-82. In 1992-93, a two-year International Studies Diploma was introduced and, in 1994-95, the extended minor in Latin American Studies was introduced. A minor was added later, along with an Associate of Arts degree in International and Development Studies and Proficiency Certificates in Spanish. A minor in Spanish Language and Culture has recently been approved. As a multidisciplinary program, LAS relies on courses offered by faculty in Spanish as well as disciplines such as Sociology, GDS, History, and Anthropology. In the past, it was strongly supported by Geography. LAS has been challenged by the retirement of two faculty members who were not replaced due to the shifting priorities of departments. Over the past couple of years , Arts has searched for faculty who will be well positioned to teach into its interdisciplinary courses and faculty have now been hired with LAS expertise, notably in Political Science and Criminology and Criminal Justice, thereby opening the way for special topics courses or new courses to be designed in accordance with program needs.

The review revealed that despite low numbers of declared and graduating LAS program students, the number of students taking courses with LAS content has in fact strengthened and LAS degree declarations have shown an upward tendency between 2012-13 and 2017-18 from a total of just 2 in 2012-3 to a current total of 9.

The conclusion of the External Review Committee is that the Latin American Studies Program is fully aligned with UFV's 2016-20 Education Plan as outlined in Learning Everywhere, and that there is "much to admire and celebrate in the whole-hearted engagement of the program's faculty members, the quality of the education they provide, and the students' interest in the interdisciplinary study of this important geo-cultural area." Reviewers argued that LAS is deserving of the University's financial and organizational commitment to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program and that "[f]ully supporting LAS will enhance the UFV's growing reputation as an institution of higher education that upholds global social responsibility." The reviewers concluded that sustainability of the program depends on (1) its home, administrative support, and recognition; (2) program autonomy and representation in decision making fora of the College of Arts; (3) curricular review; and (4) visibility." (External Review Report, pp. 2-3)

### **Recommendation 1**

*Strengthen the autonomy of the Latin America Studies Program through the following:*

- 1.1 Ensure that the chair of LAS represents the program at meetings of Heads and Chairs within the College of Arts and other decision-making fora.
- 1.2 Provide the chair of LAS with one course release per academic year.
- 1.3 Establish permanent administrative support allocated specifically to LAS.
- 1.4 Provide LAS with annual program data similar to the document generated by the Office of Institutional Research for the external review process.

**Action:** The dean will ensure that there is administrative oversight of the program either by the head of SCMS and/or releasing a Chair. LAS will not be set up as a separate administrative unit as it is too small to be administered as such. The current head and assistant of SCMS will be evaluated on their attention to this program. The Chair of LAS will be asked to focus on curriculum issues rather than administrative issues.

- 1.5 Currently, data is provided at the department, not the program, level.

**Action:** Institutional Research will be asked to provide this data to the Department Head and the Chair of the Program curriculum committee

- 1.6 Allocate physical space and financial resources to promote the autonomy and visibility of the program.

**Action:** The Dean's office cannot take administrative responsibility for the LAS program. It is currently situated within SCMS and we have expectations of collaborative leadership between the Department Head and Program Chair to attend to timetabling, allocation of courses and budget . One alternative is that, like GDS, LAS is situated in a proposed School of Global Engagement , which would need to be agreed to by faculty as either their home administrative unit or as associate members (GDS, LAS, IS, PACS, and Migration and Citizenship). If a school is formed a space proposal will be submitted to Campus Planning.

## **Recommendation 2**

- 2.1 Ensure that the chair of LAS can provide input to department heads regarding enrollment plans and scheduling and increase formal communication of the resulting annual academic plans between academic departments and interdisciplinary programs.

**Action:** There is currently an expectation that the Chair collaborates with the Head of SCMS and with fellow heads to request delivery of required courses for programs. This is not working due in part to the Chair receiving no releases specific to LAS. The dean will ask the SCMS head to assume this responsibility; the head will be asked to communicate with the dean regarding the arrangements made across disciplines. The Head will need to liaise with the Chair, and both will be invited to the annual course planning discussions.

## **Recommendation 3**

- 3.1 Maintain broad LAS-focused interdisciplinary coverage, curricular integrity and program sustainability by allocating adequate annual resources and faculty to the program in order to guarantee sufficient annual course offerings to enable students to complete the LAS minor and extended minor without delays or resorting to directed studies courses. Given current enrollments and strategic collaborations possible, potential cross-appointments that further these outcomes should be considered.

**Action:** Three new faculty hires this year can contribute to LAS and a further LAS cross-appointment with MACS or SOC was budgeted for and advertised but resulted in a failed search. This position will be requested again next year.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*Undertake a comprehensive review of the program and curriculum and establish protocols for regular update.*

4.1 Review the number of credits required for each degree and limit the offering of directed studies courses.

**Action:** Reviewers note, “ At present, UFV requires one more course to complete a minor in LAS than the equivalent program at the University of Victoria; the number of courses required to complete the extended minor at UFV is the same as those required for the major at Victoria.” Curriculum review is core to the success of this program. The curriculum committee will compare the program requirements to those at other institutions, including the University of Victoria which has fewer credit requirements. The intention is to reduce DS courses by offering an economical list of required courses that are offered regularly so that students can plan their program paths to graduate in a timely manner.

4.2 Undertake a comprehensive review of the curriculum and consider the advantages and feasibility of requiring a LAS gateway and / or capstone course.

**Action:** The reviewers note that there is “no LAS specific gateway and/or capstone course; several courses listed as eligible options for the program have not been offered in some time, including the well-received study tours in Latin America.”

A curriculum review will be completed in conjunction with the curriculum mapping exercise discussed below. The curriculum committee will consider the feasibility of introducing core courses including gateway and capstone courses. Where enrollment might not be strong enough to offer core courses, a common capstone course in Arts might be considered and will be explored with the Associate Dean of Students.

4.3 Update the list of course offerings in the calendar and complete the curricular map

**Action:** It is imperative that the Chair and curriculum committee attend to updating the course outlines this coming fall. Curriculum mapping needs to be attended to asap and will be completed no later than the end of December 2021. The Associate Dean of Students will be asked to track this activity. LAS program learning outcomes and individual course outcomes need to be mapped. Some courses might need to be eliminated and others designed, with the intention of ensuring those that are on the books are offered regularly.

4.4 Establish annual meetings of LAS faculty to discuss curricular issues.

**Action:** The curriculum committee will meet at least once, and hopefully twice, in each fall and winter semester.

4.5 Establish protocols for more effective timely departmental consultation of curricular decisions affecting interdisciplinary programs such as LAS.

**Action:** The LAS Program Chair is encouraged to work with the Head of SCMS who will reach out to

departments to request courses. This does not require the dean taking responsibility; it is expected of the Chair and Head. When other departments are not obliging, the dean will intervene to ensure that these courses are offered.

## **Recommendation 5**

5.1 Increase financial support and the number of sections offered for the Spanish language programs

**Action:** Arts has invested in a new part-time Spanish hire.

5.2 Provide financial support and teaching resources for the teaching of Indigenous languages from Latin America.

**Action:** The scope letter asked for the committee to focus on Indigenization of the curriculum hoping that something akin to a comparative Indigenous issues course might be designed or a course including focus on UNDRIP . The external committee simply introduced the idea of teaching Indigenous languages for Latin America but, as the Chair of the curriculum committee notes, this is impractical given that there are about 800 Indigenous languages currently spoken in Latin America, and the question of which to focus on and where to find qualified instructors would be challenging. The curriculum committee believes it offers a Pan-American focus of Indigenous issues in its courses thereby offering students the basis for self-reflection on issues related to the Indigenous cultures in Canada. The curriculum committee is encouraged to consider a core course focussed on a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples of the world.

5.3 : Provide financial support and teaching resources for the teaching of Portuguese.

**Action:** The Chair of LAS is in favour of this as Portuguese is the third most widely spoken language in the western hemisphere with about 210 million speakers and Brazil has the ninth largest GDP in the world, ahead of Canada and Canada and Brazil have significant trade, investment and development relationships. Despite the logic of this argument, Arts is not able to invest in yet another language in MOLA, particularly when we are trying to build resources for the new Spanish Minor.

## **Recommendation 6**

6.1 Ensure collaboration between the chair of LAS, the Office of the Dean and UFV International to facilitate broader internationalization opportunities and LAS-related experiential learning opportunities in the Fraser Valley.

**Action:** LAS integrates experiential learning into its curriculum, but this needs to be advertised and supported, particularly with respect to field trips and practica opportunities. Between 1993 and 2014, LAS offered 13 study tours to Mexico, Peru, and Spain, involving over 200 students. These have not been offered of late. The Head and Program Chair will continue to identify practicum opportunities at local schools, NGOs and agencies and overseas institutions (e.g. ITESM in Querétaro, Mexico). The Arts Practicum Coordinator and the International Office will be approached to assist with this, and these opportunities will be advertised.

## **Recommendation 7**

7.1 Request that the Communications Strategist for College of Arts work with the chair of LAS to

develop a communication strategy for the program.

**Action:** The Chair of the LAS curriculum committee will work with the Communications Assistant to this end and will discuss possibilities for recruiting international students with UFV International .

#### **Recommendation 8**

8.1 Revise and update the LAS webpage and the program's printed materials.

**Action:** The SCMS Head and Chair will work on this with the College of Arts and University Relations.

#### **Recommendation 9**

9.1 Create new options for faculty to reduce teaching loads in order to conduct research.

**Action:** LAS faculty will be made aware of existing opportunities and will be encouraged to seek out collaborative research opportunities as well.

#### **Concluding comments:**

The LAS program has a deep history and it holds much potential. The program is fully aligned with the very important goal of developing local and global citizenship and the dean's office is committed to monitoring the resolution of the long-standing challenges of curriculum review and administration .