

REVIEW OF THE B.A. IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE STUDIES

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 16.0901
French Language and Literature

OVERVIEW

The **B.A. in French and Francophone Studies** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures within the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures houses four degree programs: a B.A. in French and Francophone Studies, B.A. in German, a B.A. in Spanish, and M.A in Language, Literatures, and Cultures. In addition, the department offers minors in Classical Studies, East Asian Studies, French and Francophone Studies, German, Italian Studies, and Spanish and an Instructional Technology in World Languages graduate certificate. The last review of the B.A. in French and Francophone Studies program occurred in 2013-2014.

B.A. in French and Francophone Studies program offers a dynamic interdisciplinary lens for exploring the diverse cultural productions of the Francophone world: language, literature, the arts, politics, philosophy, and other fields of human inquiry and creative expression. Students engage closely with faculty in small seminars and regularly study abroad. Graduates in French and Francophone studies demonstrate language proficiency, intercultural competencies, and analytical skills. Students enrolling in the B.A. in French and Francophone Studies select from either the French and Francophone Studies sequence or the French Teacher Education sequence.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2014-2021

B.A. in French and Francophone Studies, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
French and Francophone Studies sequence	14	3	7	7	3	4	2	5
French Teacher Education sequence	6	5	6	5	6	7	9	11
No subplan		4						
Total	20	12	13	12	9	11	11	16

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, 2014-2021

B.A. in French and Francophone Studies, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
General French sequence	4		1	1	2	1		1
French Teacher Education sequence	2		1	1		1	1	
No subplan				1				
Total	6	4	2	3	2	2	1	1

Table notes: Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The B.A. in French provides students with advanced language skills and knowledge of French culture, literature, language, and pedagogy. These skills and knowledge will enable them to be intelligent and responsible citizens of a globalized world and to successfully pursue careers in teaching, business, government, or non-governmental organizations.

Student learning outcomes

The student will demonstrate:

1. competency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading French;
2. knowledge in the culture of a country or region speaking French and of the culture's global context;
3. competency in using critical thinking, particularly from a cross-national perspective;
4. knowledge of French and/or Francophone literature in its socio-historical context;
5. knowledge of the structure of the French language;
6. In the case of teacher education majors knowledge of current theories, methods and issues in foreign language education and professional journals and organization/sources; competency in critical thinking about those theories, methods and issues; and successful practical application of their knowledge and skills in classes, clinical experiences and student teaching.

Program curriculum (2021-2022)

Graduation requirements (General French sequence):

120 credit hours including 35 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 35 credit hours for the degree program include 35 credit hours of French.

Graduation requirements (French Teacher Education sequence):

120 credit hours including 67 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 67 credit hours for the degree program include 26 credit hours of French courses, 6 credit hours of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures courses, 9 credit hours of French elective courses, and 26 credit hours of professional education courses external to the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2021)

16 tenure track faculty members (8 Professors, 7 Associate Professors, and 1 Assistant Professors)

13 non-tenure track faculty members (9 full-time, 4 part-time, totaling 11.4 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 4 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 7 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The French Teacher Education sequence in the B.A. in French program, as one of the teacher education programs at Illinois State University, is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The last accreditation review was conducted in October 2019, and the University successfully met all five of the national standards for educator preparation. The French teacher education sequence is also approved by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a specialized professional association affiliated with

CAEP. The teacher education sequence is subject to annual review and approval by the Illinois State Board of Education. There is no specialized accreditation for the non-teaching sequence in the French program.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

According to the MLA, graduate and undergraduate language programs (French in particular) have been in steady decline throughout the United States. Unfortunately, this decline does not accurately reflect the reality of the global society in which not everyone speaks English fluently. French and Francophone Studies programs must therefore transform themselves to engage with the practical aspects of foreign language education. For example, the French Embassy is committed to supporting French for professional purposes in the United States. The question the field must now ask itself is how to make French proficiency more useful in the professional world and more applicable to commercial interests. French and Francophone Studies faculty at the University have undergone specialized training to learn how to best teach French for the professions. ACTFL is also a strong advocate for framing foreign language education as an integral part of professionalization and career development. According to ACTFL, foreign language education cultivates important employability skills, including interpersonal skills, personal qualities, technology use, systems thinking, communication skills, information use, resource management, critical thinking skills, and applied academic skills. Moreover, ACTFL argues that “typical language curriculum is built around general topics that may seem irrelevant to 21st century learners.”¹² ACTFL recommends incorporating STEM and problem/project-based learning as much as possible.

Regardless of these trends, program success depends heavily on enrollment and financial sustainability. Until the University and its students fully understand and acknowledge the importance of foreign language education with respect to employability,¹³ economic growth, cultural competency, and globalization, French and Francophone Studies will remain an at-risk program. Possible areas for consideration include (1) creating a university-wide language requirement, (2) adding and/or increasing foreign language requirements (i.e., 116) for diversity-focused interdisciplinary programs (e.g., African Studies, Ethnic Studies, Latin American and Latino/a Studies, Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies), and (3) providing more institutional support (i.e., increase tenure lines) for smaller language programs like French and Francophone Studies. Often strapped for resources, French and Francophone Studies faculty struggle to manage all of their professional obligations while providing highly individualized attention to students.

Nevertheless, some of the observations noted in the previous program review hold true today: French is still the second most studied foreign language in American colleges and universities after Spanish; French and Francophone Studies continue to evolve in response to changing demographics and technological advances; French programs across the nation continue to move toward a more integrated understanding of language, literature, and culture; French programs nationwide no longer emphasize literature, but rather prioritize intercultural communication, language pedagogy, and professional practice.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

After the last program review, the Academic Planning Committee (APC) found the B.A. in French to be in good standing. The APC nevertheless made the following recommendations to be addressed during the current program review cycle: (1) building on recruitment and retention successes during the last eight years, continue efforts to increase program enrollment beyond current levels; (2) continue to monitor and adjust the curriculum to meet student needs; curricular changes in course content and pedagogy to improve speaking and listening skills of teacher education majors and speaking and writing skills of non-teacher-education majors; (3) promote increased participation in the Honors program, study abroad programs, and co-curricular activities relevant to French and Francophone Studies, including service opportunities; (4) explore opportunities for collaboration with the College of Business to provide students opportunities to study and be credentialed in business French; (5) develop and implement a plan to recruit for gender diversity in the student population. The French Section has made a conscientious effort to address each of these recommendations.

In response to the APC's recommendations, the faculty have taken the following initiatives: (1) the curriculum was modified to meet student learning needs and to ensure healthy enrollments, particularly in 2017 with the extensive program revision for both major sequences; (2) program faculty expanded the availability of French tutoring by designating all faculty as tutors for all levels and by hiring international GAs (e.g., Moroccan) to staff the French Grammar Help Desk when available; (3) faculty improved speaking and listening skills of teacher-education (and general) majors with the creation of FRE 215; (4) the program implemented strategies for maintaining language proficiency of students at the 200 and 300 levels such as requiring student participation in conversation groups outside the classroom and including more oral projects (podcasts, classroom debates, presentations, Talk Abroad, Share Ami, etc.) within classes; (5) faculty promoted increased participation in study abroad programs and co-curricular activities through aggressive and sustained promotional strategies (flyers, class visits, attendance at the study abroad fair, etc.); (6) the program added courses in linguistics (FRE 341: History of the French Language I) and film (FRE 386) to ensure curricular balance with extant literature and culture courses; and (7) increased student involvement in service learning and community outreach projects with volunteer/internship opportunities at the Community Health Care Clinic and Immigration Project.

In addition, (1) faculty redoubled recruitment efforts by visiting local high schools, as well as meeting individually with all students enrolled in classes to discuss how best to incorporate French into their plans of study; (2) program faculty revised and streamlined the curriculum so that it better reflected current trends in the discipline and responded to student demand; (3) faculty balanced the curriculum so that diversity issues were addressed more frequently and organically in all of the program's courses; (4) the program further explored service learning/internship opportunities with local and international partners (e.g., the Community Health Care Clinic, Immigration Project, the Unity Community Center, the McLean Country Circuit Court, the Normal Police Department) and nontraditional study abroad opportunities (e.g., Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco); (5) FRE 236 (French for Global Business) was added to the curriculum and established Illinois State University as an accredited test center for Diplomas in French for Professions; (6) faculty redesigned a 200-level grammar course (FRE 235: Advanced French Grammar, now FRE 215: Advanced Grammar and Oral Proficiency) in order to improve students' oral proficiency in the target language; and (7) the program began negotiating a unilateral exchange with a French university (Université Rennes 2) to add a different native French speaker to the program as a GA each year. Nevertheless, the French Section – much like the University as a whole – must continue to focus on encouraging greater gender diversity in the student population.

Major findings

Representative of national trends, French and Francophone Studies enrollments have been in steady decline since the last program review cycle. However, the program has recently observed a modest increase that the faculty will continue to encourage. The demographic profile for French and Francophone Studies has remained largely unchanged and reflects the overall undergraduate degree-seeking student population at the University. In addition, French and Francophone Studies faculty continue to make contributions to students enrolled in other programs via courses intended to fulfill the foreign language graduation requirement, the AMALI (formerly Global Studies) graduation requirement, and various General Education requirements. While the program is no longer able to offer as many sections of 100-level courses as before due to recent and seemingly permanent reductions in instructional capacity (particularly where tenure-line faculty are concerned), these classes continue to meet maximum enrollments. Surveys sent to majors, minors, and alumni reveal an overall satisfaction with the curriculum and faculty expertise. They find faculty to be highly knowledgeable, approachable, and invested in student success. Unsurprisingly, many indicated a desire for more course offerings each semester. The surveys also identified two areas for improvement that remain within the faculty's control: (1) sustained focus on the development of students' speaking proficiency, particularly in colloquial French; and (2) the integration of grammar instruction in 300-level courses.

Initiatives and plans

Based on the findings of the present self-study, French and Francophone Studies faculty have identified the following initiatives for the coming program review cycle: (1) explore the possibility of creating a French and Francophone Studies course in English to promote the program and recruit students whose plans of study do not

have a language requirement; (2) investigate the feasibility and interest of establishing a certificate in French and Francophone Studies that has fewer requirements than the minor and will appear on student transcripts; (3) capitalize on existing and/or create new internship opportunities with University partners that would allow French and Francophone Studies students to use French professionally; (4) focus recruitment efforts on nursing and pre-med students through the creation of a medical French course or the designing of a thematic unit on language and healthcare in FRE 236 and other courses; (5) redouble the program's efforts to establish non-traditional study abroad experiences in North Africa and/or sub-Saharan West Africa; (6) maintain connections with local partners in the Bloomington-Normal community and explore the addition of a community service requirement to the major and minor and/or the integration of civically minded assignments into existing courses; and (7) develop and implement a plan to include students in research and creative activities.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.A. in French and Francophone Studies program in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive, evidence based, and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders including from an alumni advisory board.

The committee notes that the program's enrollments have declined during the period covering the program review (from 20 in 2014 to 16 in 2021). These declines in enrollments are consistent with other language programs nationally. However, the committee also notes that the program attracts students enrolling in the program as a second major (typically adding 3-4 additional students) and minor (averaging in over 30 French minors each Fall during the period of review). The program faculty indicate a desire for controlled growth of the program with continued student interest and opportunities for graduates. The committee commends the program faculty for efforts that have led to high levels of gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students. The percentage of students identifying as women has fluctuated during the period of review (between 54 and 83 percent). The percentage of undergraduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has consistently remained well above the University average (ranging between 33 and 56 percent for the program). The committee commends the department for their comprehensive recruitment plan that includes the use of personal interviews and letters with area high school students and offering special events that highlight the major (e.g., the French Film Series, and hosting invited speakers).

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their students. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses following best practice guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL). This practice is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. The committee commends the program for aligning their creative and varied co-curricular with their program learning objectives and assessment plan. These opportunities allow students to engage with the community, learn from experts in the field, and network with potential employers. These varied opportunities include volunteer and internship opportunities at the Community Health Care Clinic, the Immigration Project, and language tutoring at the UNITY Community Center in Normal. The program faculty also support a local chapter of the Honors Society in French, which sponsors a wide variety of civic and community events. We further commend the program faculty for their support of study abroad opportunities to visit diverse international cultures (e.g., France and Quebec, Canada). The committee also commends the program for the increasing student participation in the University Honors Program. These varied experiences help the program prepare students for employment and build a strong student community in the program.

The committee commends the faculty for their ongoing review and revisions to the curriculum during the period of review based on feedback from multiple stakeholders. This work included the development of a proposal for several new courses: FRE 236 French for Global Business, FRE 237 Critical Readings in French, FRE 285 Topics in French Language, Literature, and Culture, and FRE Selected Topics in French and Francophone Cinema. The program faculty also reviewed and revised the curriculum to align with current instructional capacity and disciplinary trends as well as to streamline the major, to increase flexibility by reducing the number of specific required courses, and to increase the transparency of course titles. The program faculty are commended for their work to infuse issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the program curriculum. The committee further commends the program faculty for their support of and participation in institutional programs (e.g., General Education, AMALI).

The committee commends the program faculty on the development, implementation, and revision of their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. During the current review cycle, faculty have collected and used the evidence gathered through the student learning outcomes assessment plan to inform program changes.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the B.A. in French and Francophone Studies. Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journals articles, and book chapters. Additionally, we recognize that every faculty in the program has been actively involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom.

The committee appreciates the in-depth aspirational program analysis. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that faculty developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State University.

The committee commends the program faculty for being accredited by both the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Furthermore, we also commend the program faculty for maintaining program standards that meet the Illinois teacher licensure requirements set by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the Department of Languages, Literature, and Cultures for the opportunity to provide input regarding the B.A. in French and Francophone Studies program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with department faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for controlled enrollment growth. The committee notes that, consistent with national trends, enrollment in the program declined over the period of review. We recognize the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts and streamlining the curriculum which have resulted in an increase in the Fall 2021 program enrollments. We support the program faculty's proposed initiatives that resulted from their analysis of aspirational programs designed to continue controlled growth of the program. Furthermore, we recognize that to sustain that growth further faculty resources may be required. We recommend that the program faculty develop a plan for controlled enrollment growth that details the relationship between enrollment, resource needs, and curricular offerings. We further recommend that the plan include an analysis of the impact of service and teaching on potential barriers to faculty scholarship and student research participation opportunities.

Continue to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The committee recognizes the efforts that have resulted in the diversity of faculty and students within the program and encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recognizes substantial work by former and current faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates (including the percentage of graduates completing the program within four years and trying to reduce the numbers of curricular exceptions needed). We recommend that the program faculty continue to explore future foreign university partnerships and how to enhance student engagement and participation (e.g., work with the Office of Study Abroad on funding opportunities). The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Continue monitoring comparator and aspirational programs. The committee strongly recommends that the program faculty continue to monitor trends and initiatives at other institutions to develop strategic action plans to respond to changes in the discipline, and to identify the unique niche that the program fills within the landscape of its comparator programs in the state. The committee requests that program faculty ensure that the aspirational goals align with student need/demand and the department's mission/strategic plan

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to French and francophone studies to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the Department and the Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the Department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Develop a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking and engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program’s alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and providing employment opportunities for program graduates.