A Checklist for Self-Study for Departments of Foreign Languages and Literatures

I. Data on the community and institution

A. The community

1. What languages are spoken in your community and among the various constituencies of your institution? What are the attitudes of your community and your institution’s constituencies toward the study of foreign languages? Are there features of the community where your institution is located that influence the community’s attitude toward the study of the languages your department teaches?

2. Are there multinational corporations in your community? What is the extent and nature of the department’s interaction with local business and cultural institutions? with local and state government agencies?

3. Does the department offer courses or programs to meet needs expressed by local industries or agencies?

4. Is there regular communication and contact with the foreign language programs in your institution’s feeder high schools? How much does your faculty know about the foreign language programs in local and feeder schools? Does the department sponsor or participate in programs or activities with local schools, colleges, and universities? with institutions in the surrounding region or abroad?

5. Does the department sponsor conferences or other activities outside the traditional curriculum?

B. The institution

1. What is the primary mission of the institution? How do the aims of the department relate to the mission of the institution as a whole? to the role of the department in the college? to the needs and interests of the students?

2. With which institutions does your institution compare itself? With which institutions does your institution compete most directly for students? How does your foreign language programs compare with foreign language programs at those institutions?

3. What are the attitudes of other departments toward the foreign language programs? How do the aims of the department compare with the recognized (i.e., traditional) aims of language and literature departments? with the aims and activities of related departments in your institution and in competing institutions?

4. How do the department’s courses fit into the institution’s general education requirements? Are there explicit foreign language requirements for admission to the institution or for the bachelor’s degree? What are they?

5. Does the department participate in joint programs of any sort? Are there joint appointments with other departments? Does the department encourage teaching courses jointly with members of other departments? Does it teach any courses for other departments? Are there mechanisms for establishing interdisciplinary courses or content-based language courses? How are these programs and courses evaluated?

6. Does the department try to exert leadership in the college in general education, interdepartmental and interdisciplinary studies, or international programs and studies?

II. Goals and priorities

A. Strategic goals

1. What are the department’s major short- and long-term aims? What does the department want to be recognized for in the next five years?

2. Have the goals, nature, or functions of the department changed substantially in the last five years? If so, how and why? Does the department anticipate that they will change in the next five years? If so, how and why?

3. Where are the aims of the department stated? How are they communicated to faculty members (especially new ones) and to students? How are they used in planning or decision making?

B. Priorities

1. In setting priorities, how does the department distinguish between undergraduate and graduate education; general and specialized education; conventional and continuing education? What role does the department give to service learning?
2. In setting goals for the undergraduate program, what priority does the department give to:
   a) student ability to function in the language in actual communicative situations?
   b) student ability to behave appropriately in the cultures in which the language is used?
   c) individual students’ needs and interests?
   d) student understanding of literature and culture?
   e) student development of all four language skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading?

3. At the graduate level, what priority does the department give to the above concerns (B2) as well as humanistic education, professional training, linguistic theory and language-learning theory, literary theory and the study of literature, language study for special purposes and in interdisciplinary contexts, and preparation for careers other than teaching?

C. Overall departmental image
1. How are published documents about the department prepared and funded? Where can faculty members, students, prospective students, and other interested parties find these documents?
2. Are the documents consistent with one another?
3. What assumptions about the aims of the department and institution do they express or project?
4. Are students and faculty members asked to review these materials periodically to ascertain their congruence with actual practice?

III. Curriculum
(Statistical information: list of programs offered, along with dates of inception and most recent revision; list of courses by topic and linguistic difficulty; graduate and undergraduate enrollments over the last ten years, with breakdown by specific levels and programs.)

A. Planning
1. How was the curriculum of the department developed? What are the principles underlying the undergraduate curriculum? the graduate curriculum?
2. To what extent and how frequently are courses and course sequences reviewed? How and on what basis are decisions made to add, drop, and modify courses? What institutional control exists over curricular changes?
3. What courses or programs has the department introduced in the last five to seven years? Have they been successful? How has that success been evaluated?
4. How has the department kept informed about national curricular trends? How has it responded to them?
5. Is the structure of each program explicit in regard to the way courses combine to fulfill the department’s aims and requirements on the undergraduate and graduate levels? What written materials do students receive to guide them? To what degree are the students aware of the expected programmatic outcomes in the assessment plan (see IIIG below)?

B. Course syllabi and outlines
1. How are course syllabi prepared and to what extent are they followed in single-section courses? in multisection courses?
2. What measures does the department take to establish uniform standards in multisection courses? Do sections share a syllabus?
3. How are uniform standards met and improved content and teaching achieved in single-section courses?
4. Are specific and measurable student performance objectives stated in syllabi? How are these objectives stated? What is their relation to set departmental outcomes for majors (see IIIG)?
5. Are syllabi organized around concepts readily identifiable to students (e.g., grammar, period, genre)?
6. How is the amount of work required of students determined?
7. To what extent and how frequently are course outlines reviewed? By whom? How do instructors receive feedback?
8. To what degree have faculty members incorporated the use of the Web into their courses?

C. Articulation
1. What is the rationale for the numbering of courses? for course sequencing? for requirements and prerequisites? Is it clear that courses are planned and offered as components of a larger program of study?
2. How is the problem of overlapping course content handled?
3. Do you state the levels of language proficiency expected of students at various course levels?
4. How does your program help students make the transition from the study of language to the study of the literature and culture in the language? How does your program integrate literature and culture into language instruction and language instruction into literature and culture courses?
5. Is input from relevant faculty members and students solicited in the process of curriculum and course evaluation and revision?

D. Placement
1. Does the department use standardized tests to place or advise students? How valid and reliable are these measures? At what levels are they given? Did the department participate in their design or selection? Do they reflect the objectives of departmental course offerings?
2. Do the placement exams measure performance in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing?
3. If advanced placement occurs, how is it handled? Placement into advanced courses? Courses waived? Credits given? Grades awarded for courses waived?
4. Does the language department or the institution regularly communicate with the feeder high schools regarding placement criteria?
5. What options does the department offer ill-prepared students? How are the instructors or tutors chosen? What is the difference between these courses and the regular sections?
6. How is tutorial assistance provided? How is it funded?

E. Enrollment
1. What do enrollment rates and attrition indicate about the effectiveness of the department's programs and personnel at the lower-division, upper-division, and graduate levels? Do they suggest that there is appropriate articulation between language courses and other courses in the department?
2. What are the attrition rates in various kinds of courses? How do they compare with the institutional attrition rate? What are the attrition rates among majors and graduate students? Do these rates seem a reasonable reflection of admission standards? Do they indicate problems with advising? What is their effect on the several missions of the department?
3. To what extent are the department's funding and course offerings dependent on enrollments or other factors partially within the control of the department?

F. Nondegree and other programs
1. Does the department offer
   a) noncredit courses?
   b) interdisciplinary concentrations?
   c) weekend or evening classes?
   d) evening degree programs?
   e) continuing education courses?
   f) community-based courses or programs?
   g) radio and TV courses?
   h) correspondence or home study courses?
   i) teacher certification workshops or institutes?
2. What are the rationales for these programs?
3. What were their enrollments for the last three years?
4. What sequences of courses are offered in these programs?
5. What institutional or external financial support is received for them?
6. What faculty resources are allocated to them? Are these courses assigned as a part of the normal faculty workload? If not, how are they counted and provided for?

G. Assessment
1. What is the department's assessment plan? What outcomes are stipulated for graduating seniors? How are those outcomes evaluated? By whom are they evaluated?
2. What assessment instruments are used? Are they standardized tests or in-house instruments? How have they been validated?
3. To what extent do students participate in the assessment process? How does the department motivate them to do so?
4. How many of the department's graduating seniors achieve the levels of performance outlined in the assessment plan?
5. What changes have been made in your program as a result of assessment?

IV. The faculty
A. Characteristics
(Statistical information: distribution of the faculty by age, rank, tenure status, sex, ethnic origin, native language, final degree, source of degrees, and specializations; number of part-time faculty [as well as number of stu-
dents they teach and FTEs they generate. Short curricula vitae are helpful.)

1. What are the competencies of the instructional staff—their specialties, interests in other subjects, expertise in other areas?

2. How are faculty members distributed by fields of specialization? How well does this distribution meet departmental needs? What needs are not met?

3. What proportion of the faculty are outstanding teachers? How well do they contribute the profession nationally?

4. Is the overall load reasonable? Is there balance in assignments? If not, what steps are being taken to correct the situation (e.g., for those who teach elementary courses or for those who primarily teach graduate courses)?

5. How does recognition of faculty achievement fit with the department's aims and functions? What adjustments are needed?

C. Recognition of faculty achievement

1. What is the role of the department in determining promotion and tenure? What are the roles and responsibilities of the department chair, the dean, institutional committees, the central administration?

2. What are the department's policies on promotion and tenure? What are the department's and institution's promotion and tenure criteria and procedures? Where are the standards and procedures stated? Explain any changes in the department's policies, standards, and procedures made in recent years.

3. What is the relative importance of teaching, scholarship, institutional service, and other factors in promotion and tenure decisions?

4. What written or unwritten guidelines exist concerning the kinds of scholarly activity that will lead to promotion and tenure?

5. What forms of reward and recognition are available other than salary, promotion, and tenure? Has the chair attempted to seek and obtain such rewards for members of the faculty?

6. How does recognition of faculty achievement fit with the department's aims and functions?

7. To what degree are nontraditional scholarly activities and the various types of scholarship (discovery, application, pedagogical) recognized in retention, tenure, and promotion decisions?

8. Do the criteria for retention, tenure, promotion, and merit salary increases reflect the actual work expectations in the department?
D. Faculty recruitment

1. How are positions defined? Are long-range plans for new courses or programs reflected in the department’s hiring practices?

2. How are new faculty members recruited? How is their recruitment coordinated among the various administrative levels at your university? To what extent do those procedures reflect departmental and institutional goals?

3. Does the department recruit candidates trained in foreign universities? Why or why not?

4. Is the department trying to be equally strong in all fields or outstanding in a few and adequate in others? Does the department attempt to replace departing faculty members with people from the same field, or are departmental needs reviewed in conjunction with each vacancy?

5. How is the search, including affirmative action efforts, conducted?

E. Faculty development

1. How is professional activity encouraged? What role does the chair play in encouraging it? Does the chair discuss plans for research and other professional activity with faculty members when resources are limited, how is support for professional travel and research distributed?

2. Is there an institutionalized leave or sabbatical system? How have faculty members used their leaves or released time in the past five years? Are all faculty members encouraged to apply for leaves?

3. How does the department encourage faculty members to retrain or to develop additional specialties?

4. Is there a mentoring system to encourage junior faculty members to work with senior faculty members in the same field?

5. How does the department or institution handle personal problems and crises that affect professional behavior or performance?

6. How are faculty members encouraged to stay current in technology? What support is available to those who want to develop teaching projects that involve the heavy use of technology?

F. Faculty salaries and incentives

1. What has been the average annual rate of increase in faculty salaries for the last ten years? How do department salaries compare with those in other departments in the institution? with those of language departments at comparable institutions? Does the department award merit raises? Are any raises mandated?

2. Do faculty members participate in departmental budgetary decisions concerning salaries and other items? If so, how? Who decides among competing demands for limited funds? Are faculty members free to consult the chair about their salaries? If they are not satisfied with the chair’s decision, are they free to go to the dean?

3. What support does the department receive for leaves, research, travel to professional meetings, faculty development, and substitute teachers? Is it adequate? Has the level of support changed in recent years? How have cuts been absorbed? How have increases been distributed? If support for these activities were increased or decreased substantially, what changes in allocation of funds would follow?

4. How is the involvement of faculty members in innovation in technology recognized and rewarded?

5. Are part-time faculty members eligible for annual raises? If so, how are they evaluated?

V. Teaching

A. Language proficiency

1. Can all faculty members use the target language in the classroom at Superior level, as measured by the ACTFL scale (able to “participate fully and effectively in conversations in formal and informal settings on topics related to practical needs and areas of professional and/or scholarly interest; provide a structured argument to explain and defend opinions and develop effective hypotheses within extended discourse” [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: Speaking, revised 1999])? Do they regularly do so, or is English frequently the language of instruction?

2. Are faculty members willing to use the language with students outside the classroom?

3. Are faculty members able to bring their understanding of cultural connotations of language to their instruction?

4. Are graduate student teaching assistants employed in your language courses? What is the minimal level of language proficiency expected of them? How are they selected? How are they trained and supervised? Do you have a language practicum or other teaching methods course?

B. Methods and approaches

1. What teaching methods are used in the department? To what extent do they reflect departmental planning? Are there periodic evaluations by peers, department chairs, deans, and so forth?

2. What support is offered (e.g., equipment, faculty development, on-campus workshops) to help faculty members strengthen their teaching and implement the design of their courses? Is the same level of support available to part-time instructors or those in nontenure lines?
3. Are opportunities for independent study available to students? If so, how is independent study supervised? How are faculty members assigned? What credit are supervisors given? How is the independent study program overseen?

4. To what extent has the department become involved in computer-assisted instruction and distance learning? Are the available hardware and software adequate? Does the university provide adequate personnel to support these activities?

C. Quality of teaching

1. What institutional data (e.g., statistical data on majors and minors, registration in electives, degrees conferred) does the department currently rely on to determine the effectiveness of its courses and programs?

2. What ongoing self-evaluation procedures are in place?

3. What formal procedures are used by students to evaluate courses and teachers?

4. How are student complaints about instruction handled? Are there ways to remedy problems if the complaints are deemed valid?

5. Does the department make regular attempts, through peer observation or other means, to evaluate teaching at all levels and ranks and to make the results available to the teachers in question?

6. How is this information used and by whom? Is it included in the instructor’s file?

7. To what extent do administrators and faculty members who teach multiple-section courses make available to teachers of other sections scholarly publications, research reports, and other information that might improve the content and teaching of courses?

8. What do librarians, college advisers, admissions and recruiting staff, and faculty members and administrators from other departments say about the quality and effectiveness of the department?

VI. Students

(Statistical information: areas of interest and degree of specialization and commitment as indicated by enrollments, broken down into lower-division, upper-division, and graduate categories, in language, linguistics, literature, and culture courses, in service and nontraditional courses, and in courses that do not count toward the major; retention rates within all courses and between courses; percentage of full-time, part-time, and nontraditional students. Profile of majors: SAT, achievement test, ACT, and GRE scores; GPA in major courses and in all courses [compare with GPA of nonmajors and of all students in the institution]; careers after graduation. Profile of graduate students: GRE, language test scores [if any], undergraduate history; number of teaching assistants and how supported; number of native and nonnative speakers; teaching experience as graduate students; opportunities for foreign travel and study; length of time to achieve MA and PhD; number who receive secondary school certification; placement of MAs and PhDs over past ten years.)

A. Enrollments, recruitment, and retention

1. What trends do these data reveal in overall enrollments in specific categories of courses, in majors, and in graduate programs? What do these data indicate about students’ continuing or changing interests?

2. How does the department recruit students for its programs and courses? How effective are its methods?

3. Does the department control any financial aid? If so, how is such aid distributed? How does the department seek to increase such aid?

4. Are teaching assistantships or research assistantships available for graduate students? How are the recipients of such appointments or awards selected? What are the selection criteria?

B. Evaluation

1. How are grading standards determined and maintained? How does the department attempt to keep grading uniform? If there is a problem with an individual instructor’s grading, how is it handled?

2. Is the grading system explained clearly and completely to the students?

3. How is emerging student proficiency evaluated, as opposed to student achievement?

4. How broad and deep are comprehensive examinations for the major and for graduate degrees?

5. How much emphasis is placed on the project, thesis, or dissertation? How is academic quality controlled?

C. Participation in the life of the department

1. What specific steps are taken to make students feel welcome in the department?

2. Are students invited to business-related or social departmental meetings? Do students serve on department committees? Are students invited to help plan and participate in colloquia, institutes, and so forth?

3. What student advice is sought when the curriculum is reviewed? When schedules are planned? When candidates for faculty positions are discussed?

4. Are students used in recruitment efforts?

D. Extracurricular activities

1. What special programs, colloquia, clubs, and informal get-togethers fostering the use of the foreign language does the department sponsor or publicize? Who participates in these activities? What do students and alumni think of them?

2. How does the department recognize students’ accomplishments, especially in writing and research outside the classroom?
3. To what degree do faculty members and students use target languages informally?

E. Advising and support

1. What aspects of advising are handled by the department? by the institution? What is the adviser-to-student ratio?
2. How are advisers rewarded?
3. If faculty members serve as advisers, how are they trained for the role and how is their work evaluated?
4. Do experienced students participate in advising new students? How is this involvement handled, tracked, and evaluated?
5. What kind of career counseling is offered?
6. What special funds are there for prizes and other awards for outstanding students?
7. Does the department maintain a fund for incidental expenses in student projects?
8. Does the department seek endowments or other external financial support? How is this done? Is the process satisfactory? How are such funds used?
9. Does the department receive adequate financial support to carry out its aims and functions? In what ways does it obtain support for innovative programs, recruiting, and social and educational functions?

E. Extracurricular opportunities and education abroad

1. Are opportunities available for internships or off-campus work-study programs? Under what conditions? At what locations? How are they publicized? What are the enrollments?
2. Are there student exchanges or linkup programs with other United States institutions? Under what conditions? At what locations? How are they publicized? What are the enrollments?
3. Are there opportunities for study abroad, including exchanges? Under what conditions? At what locations? How are they publicized? What are the enrollments? How are these programs administered or affiliated with your institution? How are the courses evaluated? What credit do students receive for participating in them? Is participation required?

VII. Operational activities

A. Governance

1. Does the department have a set of bylaws or guidelines for its organization and operation? If not, how is the department organized for the purposes of governance? If there are guidelines, are they regularly reviewed?
2. How is the department chair chosen and what are his or her powers and responsibilities? Is this method satisfactory to a majority of the department? Is the chair evaluated periodically by the faculty? What procedures provide for a change in leadership?

3. How are other departmental administrators (e.g., major advisers and directors of elementary language programs and graduate studies) chosen? Are these administrators evaluated periodically by the faculty? What procedures provide for a change in leadership?
4. Which tasks and responsibilities does the chair ordinarily delegate to other administrators or to committees? To what extent is the chair regularly available to department members?
5. In what ways do faculty members participate in decision making in the department? Does this level of involvement seem satisfactory to a majority of the department?
6. How often are departmental meetings held? What are they used for (e.g., to disseminate information, present committee reports, explore issues, make major policy decisions)? Are these meetings considered successful by the department chair, the faculty, and the college administration? Does the faculty have sufficient opportunity to make its voice heard at meetings?
7. What is the committee structure of the department? How is committee membership determined? What authority do committees have? Do committees have specific charges? To whom do they report? Is there any provision for rotating membership on committees?

B. Collective bargaining

1. If a collective bargaining agreement exists, how does it determine salaries and influence such activities as hiring and the evaluation of faculty members, workload, and administration? Who participates in the bargaining process?
2. To what extent does collective bargaining contribute to the aims and functions of the department? To what extent does it pose difficulties?

C. Public relations

1. How does the department publicize its activities to the institutional community, to the local community, and to alumni?
2. In what ways does the department cultivate its relations with its alumni?
3. What is the image presented by the department’s Web site? Who maintains the site? How current is it? How is its maintenance supported and recognized?
3. Is security adequate?
4. Is secretarial or clerical assistance adequate? Are office systems satisfactory (e.g., mail distribution, scheduling, record keeping)?
5. Is the library adequate for the department’s courses and programs? Does the library staff assist students and faculty members satisfactorily?
6. To what degree is technological support adequate for the department’s courses and programs? How are they supervised? Does the department have an adequate voice in the planning and administration of the use of technology on campus?
7. Is there appropriate institutional or private bookstore support for the department’s faculty members and students?
8. Are support services available for weekend, summer, and evening activities?
9. Are academic, career, and psychological counseling services provided by staff outside the department? Are they satisfactory? What kind of liaison is there between the department and these counselors?

B. Equipment
1. Do all faculty members, including part-time instructors, have up-to-date computers, monitors, and printers in their offices? How often are computers in faculty offices replaced? How are the software packages on faculty computers kept up-to-date? Describe the faculty members’ access to and use of the Internet, databases, online library catalogs, e-mail, chat rooms, and other electronic learning-teaching-research tools. Describe the campus support system for technology.
2. Does the department provide adequate access to fax machines! duplicating machines! audiovisual equipment! laptops? How adequate is the budget for copying?
3. What kind of technological support is provided to graduate students?
4. How well does the institution support student access to technology? Is this support adequate for the current and future projected needs of the courses taught in your department? Does the department have its own facility to provide technological learning support to students?
5. Do all faculty members have their own telephone with campus, local, and long-distance access? Does the budget adequately support telephone communication?
6. How is the use of technology in teaching supported by available equipment (source! location?) and by trained personnel? To what degree is the use of technology in instruction promoted by the institution? Are the promotional efforts supported in a financially adequate way?
7. Are sufficient funds available to keep library holdings and instructional materials current? Do students and faculty members have access to current journalistic publications from the target cultures? Is growth in these areas possible?

C. Physical facilities
1. Do all faculty members have their own office? How large is that office and how is it typically furnished? How well are faculty offices maintained?
2. Is classroom space adequate? Is the design (or arrangement) of the space satisfactory?
3. Is sufficient access to physical facilities for institutional programs available during weekends, summers, and evenings?
4. Do the physical facilities encourage students, faculty members, and staff to take pride in their environment and in the institution?

Note

2001 Revision of the Checklist

For the 1994 checklist (ADFL Bulletin, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 57–64), Jeffrey K. Riegel revised a previously published version and adapted it to better reflect the language instruction concerns of the typical foreign language department. For the current checklist, Arthur D. Mosher, 2000–01 president of ADFL, updated the terminology, particularly with reference to technology, added references to the use of part-time faculty members, and included a section on assessment. A few questions were revised to apply more inclusively to public and private colleges and universities. With the publication of this revised version of the checklist, the ADFL Executive Committee seeks to assist departmental chairs in the preparation of self-studies both for external review and for self-evaluation.