

May 26, 2026

Professor Nick Rule
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

RE: Interim Monitoring Report on UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Italian Studies¹

Dear Prof. Rule,

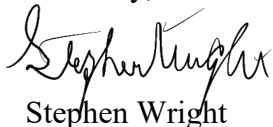
I write in response to your letter of Sep. 12, 2025, requesting an Interim Monitoring Report on the 2020-21 UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Italian Studies.

The UTQAP cyclical review process is an invaluable exercise that affords us the opportunity to take stock of our academic units and programs, to recognize achievement, and identify areas for improvement. As you note, under section 6.9.1.4 of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process, a brief status report on the implementation of plans outlined in the Dean's administrative response is due midway between the last and next UTQAP cyclical review site visits.

I am pleased to send you this status report in the attached Table, where each of the Review Recommendations in the Implementation Plan has been addressed, with updates provided from the Dean's office and the unit on progress made to date.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to prepare this Interim Monitoring Report. The reviewers' comments and recommendations continue to help inform the future priorities of the Italian Studies undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies.

Sincerely,



Stephen Wright
Interim Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science

¹ As of July 1, 2025, the Department of Italian Studies merged with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and was renamed as the Department of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies.

Professor, Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

cc.

Luca Somigli, Interim Chair, Department of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese & Latin American Studies,
Faculty of Arts & Science

Gillian Hamilton, Vice Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science

Ebba Kurz, Interim Associate Dean, Unit-Level Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science

Lachmi Singh, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-
Provost, Academic Programs

Amanda Pullan, Academic Planning & Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and
Science

UTQAP Cyclical Review Interim Monitoring Report

As required under [UTQAP section 6.9.1.4](#), the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs (VPAP) will request the Interim Monitoring Report from the Dean midway between the review and year of the next site visit.

Department of Italian Studies, Faculty of Arts & Science

UTQAP Cyclical Review: January 20-21, 2021

Review Reported to Governance: October 26, 2021

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Prompt	Dean's Report <i>The status of the implementation of plans outlined in the Dean's administrative response (e.g., are these proceeding within the original timeframe, have adjustments to the plan been necessary, have any unexpected challenges emerged, etc.?)</i>
The reviewers noted that little progress had been made on several key recommendations from the 2012 UTQAP review, including those regarding curriculum updates, adequate pedagogical training for graduate students, and diversity of the faculty complement.	1	In 2022-23, the former Department of Italian Studies presented a unit-level plan to the senior leadership in the Dean's Office. The merger of the Department of Italian Studies with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the renaming of the Department to the Department of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese & Latin American Studies (ISPLAS) in 2025, impacted the implementation of curricular and other changes. These changes are discussed below in #2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
The reviewers strongly recommended updates to the undergraduate and graduate curricula, noting that the emphasis on chronological coverage and historical periodization at both levels is no longer consistent with the current state of the discipline. ○ Undergraduate: the reviewers observed that a review and update of the curriculum is overdue, and that "the current curriculum still shows little evidence of the 2012 external review's recommendation to	2	The Unit reviewed their program curricula and has made several changes. Undergraduate: After a thorough review of its undergraduate programs, the Unit proposed a set of changes that were approved the Faculty of Arts & Science Council on April 15, 2026. These will be implemented starting in the academic year 2027-28. While the old curriculum focused on literature and on chronological/historical coverage, the new curriculum has four broad areas of study: 1. Literature; 2. Linguistics and Language Pedagogy; 3. Film and Visual Studies; 4. Cultural Studies. In addition to reflecting more closely the current state of the discipline, which has expanded to include many forms of cultural production in addition to literature, and which engages in dialogue with related disciplines such as linguistics, gender and queer studies or

go 'beyond traditional categories and period boundaries.'" ○ Graduate: the reviewers strongly recommended a thorough review of the MA/PhD curriculum "with a view to definitively abandoning the coverage model in favor of a more flexible, cross-disciplinary and topic driven model"; they also recommended a concomitant realignment of admission requirements for these programs		diaspora studies, this model aligns more closely with the research interests of the faculty, which, through recent hires, has become more diverse than it was when the review was first conducted. Graduate: A review of the graduate program was intentionally delayed when the departmental merger was underway. The unit is now undertaking a review of the Italian graduate program in conjunction with the Spanish graduate program. This will allow for better conceptualization of the interdisciplinary courses that cut across research themes of the new Department.
The reviewers commented that graduate students do not receive adequate pedagogical training prior to teaching undergraduate courses.	3	The A&S Teaching and Learning Office continues to offer pedagogical consultations for course instructors. The University's Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation also offer specific supports for graduate course instructors. At the Department level Italian Studies, as part of the ISPLAS, will be participating in a training program piloted by the former Department of Spanish and Portuguese for graduate students participating in undergraduate teaching. This program offers a dedicated graduate course with individual mentored training under the supervision of a faculty member.
The reviewers recommended improving professional skills training for graduate students, to better prepare them for both academic and non-academic careers.	4	As a result of the new departmental structure, the training of all graduate students is currently being revised, see #3 above. The Department is aware that students in graduate programs face the same challenges and need further professional training, especially for non-academic careers. At the Faculty level, support for professional skills training and support for doctoral students is offered through the Office of Graduate Professional Development & Student Success (GPDSS) in the Faculty of Arts & Science. This office supports graduate student professional development and progress through the degree. It delivers programming such as skills and career exploration workshops, partners with academic units to offer discipline-specific professionalization initiatives and helps build resources that enhance student success within and beyond academia. A&S doctoral students may also participate in the signature PhD Professional Development Cohort Program, a structured, eight-week, cohort-based initiative that supports doctoral

		students in exploring career pathways within and beyond academia while building professional skills and networks.
The reviewers observed the lack of any female full professors, as well as the absence of any non-White faculty members, and strongly recommended that the diversity of the faculty complement be considered in future hiring.	5	The unit continues to consider EDI principles in faculty hiring and the overall diversity of the faculty complement. Since the last review, the unit has increased representation based on gender and racial identity at the full professor and assistant professor ranks. Additionally, the full-time faculty complement for Italian Studies has now reached gender parity.
The reviewers recommended ways to ensure sufficient leadership in this area. “We urge the Department to think purposefully about training all of its tenure-stream faculty for leadership roles, because they will be needed sooner or later.”	6	Since the merger, the leadership situation for the unit has changed, and there is a larger pool of tenured faculty from which to select a chair for the new Department. See also #5.
The reviewers observed significant problems with Departmental morale and culture, stemming from a variety of internal and external factors, with graduate students in particular commenting on a “lack of trust and transparency” and “systemic misogyny and racism in the Department.”	7	In 2021, the Dean’s Office retained an external professional law firm to conduct a departmental climate review. Several recommendations around issues such as civility in the workplace, transparency, EDI, and anti-racism and -harassment training were made. The unit has implemented these recommendations through a departmental retreat, dedicated workshops, and presentations at departmental meetings, as well as a review of internal policies. An EDI committee, at arm’s length from the departmental administration, has been established. In this process, we have received support and advice from the Anti-Racism Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO), the Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision, and individuals within the FAS Dean’s Office. The unit has worked with these partners to ensure that best practices are observed in hiring decisions. As described in #5, the diversity of the faculty complement has increased as a result of these efforts.
The reviewers noted comments from both faculty and graduate students regarding perceptions of apparent preferential treatment of graduate students from Italy.	8	As described in # 7, the unit is taking steps to address this recommendation and has also held faculty training for identifying and addressing unconscious biases.
The reviewers urged the Department to pursue and strengthen systematic relationships and affiliations with other units within the University, in the form of shared faculty appointments and joint courses; they also made recommendations to strengthen the	9	The merger of the Department of Italian Studies with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and the formation of the new Department of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies is direct evidence of the commitment towards interdisciplinary collaboration.

Department's impact and visibility within the local community.		The unit has pursued joint lines with other units, most notably joint tenure-stream appointments with the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies and Renaissance Studies at Victoria College. The Italian Studies unit continues to organize public-facing events for both the U of T community and the larger Italian community in the GTA.
Findings of assessments of program effectiveness, conducted as outlined in the self-study (<i>see section 3.4 of the self-study template for more information</i>)		The former Department of Italian Studies had an Undergraduate Curriculum and Programmes Committee and Graduate Program Committee that met regularly to discuss program and curricular change. They are now part of the wider Department's Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees.
The status of any additional items discussed at the AP&P meeting as captured in the FAR/IP		N/A
A statement of who was consulted in developing this brief report and (where applicable) a statement of how the Faculty/division has monitored the implementation of review recommendations (<i>e.g., through annual meetings between the dean and chairs; through annual reports to Faculty governance, etc.</i>)		This report has been produced in consultation with the Interim Chair of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies, who was the Chair of the former Department of Italian Studies.