

**Visual Language Interpreting Program  
Comprehensive Program Review, Fall 2018  
Self-Study Recommendations**

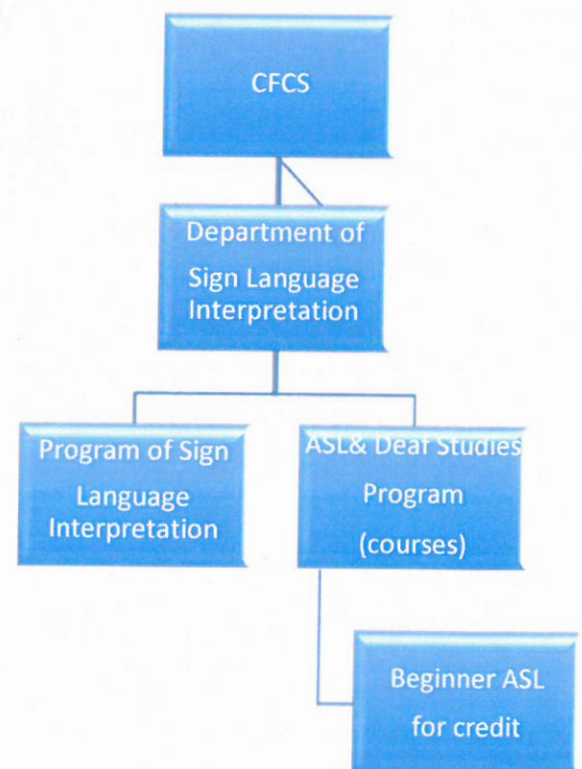
## **Purpose and Scope**

This comprehensive program review looks at the program of Sign Language Interpretation (INTR), a diploma program first offered at Douglas College in 1988. This is a diploma program that prepares students to facilitate communication between people who can hear and deaf people as they participate in various settings in which deaf people are involved in society. Students learn principles of managing interpretation, communicating bilingually, interacting bi-culturally and the importance of professional standards. Students entering the INTR program must have a foundation in American Sign Language (ASL), typically received through an ASL and Deaf Studies program. Douglas does not currently offer such a program, so applicants typically receive their foundational language and culture skills elsewhere before applying to the program.

## **Key Recommendations**

The program offers the following recommendations to allow us to better meet the needs of the students, employers and clients of interpreters, and enhance benefits for the College.

1. Offer ASL for credit at Douglas College to cast a wider net for potential program applicants, as well as provide the opportunity to the greater College student body to study ASL.
2. Offer an ASL and Deaf Studies program as an alternative pathway of entry for applicants, and to provide the opportunity to study ASL and Deaf culture to the greater College student body.
3. Situate both ASL for credit and the ASL and Deaf Studies program in the Department of Sign Language Interpretation. This will allow for another regular position for a Deaf ASL instructor, therefore allowing instruction to be divided across programs. By doing so, program students will be [exposed to] more variety in language modelling and instruction [see graphic]. This design will also allow the department the control required to deliver the best curriculum progression for students from beginning ASL to final courses in the Program of Sign Language Interpretation.
4. Improve current program courses with an eye to streamline curriculum, increase rigor and provide a richer educational experience for students.
5. Change course names, as needed, to more accurately reflect the course content and adhere to terminology currently used in the field.
6. Adjust pre-requisites to better reflect the expected requirement to move forward to each semester
7. Require an advanced level of English as an entrance requirement rather than as the current exit requirement; the latter also serves to decrease the program credits from 63 to 60.
8. Improve the program webpage navigatability for those looking for more information, as well as potential applicants making their way through the application process.



**Sign Language Interpreting Program  
External Review Panel Recommendations  
Dr. Debra Russell, PhD, Certified Interpreter  
(19<sup>th</sup> May 2019)**

**Reasonable Recommendations**

The review identifies eight recommendations, some of which are systemic and others which can be address at the faculty level. The recommendations stem from the review and address the shortcomings identify in the report.

I agree that the largest risk facing the program is that the ASL and Deaf Studies program is not part of the Douglas College program. I recognize the historical factors that led to the program being offered by Vancouver Community College (VCC), however the report does not identify ways in which they have attempted to integrate the programs over the past few years. This arrangement is the only one of its kind in Canada, and while it appears to have functioned for many years, it poses significant challenges as Douglas College does not then have input into curriculum, instructor selection, student recruitment, marketing, and so on. Delivering the program at Douglas College would be very structurally sound, however this may come with a number of challenges, not the least of which would see VCC likely closing their program, and that may be untenable to them. The risk of not addressing this model of two institutions programming is that both programs suffer and more importantly, the field is negatively impacted with the lack of graduates to meet the ever-increasing demand for interpreters.

The opportunity to offer ASL and Deaf Studies for credit is a huge opportunity that may result in greater numbers of students that consider interpreting as a career. My experience at the University of Alberta was that once we began offering 6 credits of ASL, which met the requirement of a second language, the courses were immediately popular and at the current time there are over 120 students enrolled in those courses per semester. This is also a pathway for students to acquire ASL knowledge and skills that can be applied to any number of disciplines and college programs, for example nursing, dentistry, medicine, engineering and so on.

The other recommendations on updating courses and website are matters that are easily addressed as part of program renewal.

**Other Recommendations to Consider**

Some programs are offering ASL and Deaf Studies via distance education methods, and while this needs to be carefully designed and delivered, it can increase the access to the program beyond those who can attend classes at the physical campus.

In terms of ASL and Deaf Studies, there may be ways to merge the VCC and Douglas College programs to result in greater program cohesion and renewal, however this option does not appear in the Internal Self Study document.

If Douglas College were to gain approval for a degree in interpreting, there are a number of ways that this could serve to address the consistent theme found across all of the stakeholder groups, which is for


greater skill capacity in graduates. This would also then put Douglas College in a position to strive for North American accreditation through the Commission on the Collegiate for Interpreter Education (CCIE). In contrast, if there are few options to create a degree program in BC, it would be useful to have an articulation agreement for Douglas College students to then enter GBC at year three or four, depending on the length of the BC program. This may be a draw for students from other areas where there are programs but no degree transfer options (for example, Alberta or Manitoba).

Given the increase in VRS and Video Remote Interpreting, there are opportunities to construct a course that prepares students for entry into VRS and VRI work, and this could be a potential area of partnership between Douglas College and some of the major VRS providers in the Vancouver market. While few graduates at the current time are suited for VRS/VRI work, if the program were longer in length and if the course offered training specifically for this area of specialization, then it might prove to be attractive. Such new program development could also be documented as an action research project, and result in research publications for the faculty.

As well, it may be useful to consider constructing an on-line post-diploma program in medical interpreting. This type of program is something that Douglas College offered previously through Continuing Education in a face-to-face summer format. There continues to be a need for such training, however an alternate delivery method would ensure it is available to larger numbers of interpreters across Canada. Finally, should the Federal Accessibility Act pass in 2018 there will be a huge demand for interpreters and translators who are Deaf. This also is an untapped area, in that none of the programs have created a specialty track for Deaf translation studies and nor has there been targeted recruitment of Deaf students to any of the interpreting programs across Canada.



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| <p><b>VPA's RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>In particular, INTR should focus on the following:</p> | <p>Without predetermining the question of location, the INTR faculty are encouraged to proceed to develop program restructuring and delivery options to open up admission pathways, to streamline and improve curriculum as warranted, and to improve student recruitment and enrolment. Working with the Dean and the Special Projects Officer, INTR is asked to submit a proposed program renewal document to the VPA's Office by <b>31<sup>st</sup> August 2019</b>.</p> |
| <p><b>Next scheduled PR (5 – 7 years):</b></p>  |   |

  
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 Vice-President, Academic and Provost

May 23 2019  
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 Date