

Unit Name: Department of Modern Languages Assessment Summary Fall 2008-Spring 2009

What are the student learning outcomes in your unit?

The Department designs its curriculum and pedagogy to meet the State of Indiana's Standards for Foreign Language Learning, which derives from the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. These standards are organized around five goal areas, commonly termed "the five C's of foreign language education": *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.*

- **Communication.** Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1. Interpersonal Communication: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 2. Interpretive Communication: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 3. Presentational Communication: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

- **Cultures.** Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 4. Practices of Culture: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 5. Products of Culture: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

- **Connections.** Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 6. Interdisciplinary Connections: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 7. Accessing Information: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

- **Comparisons.** Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture.

Standard 8. Language Comparisons: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 9. Culture Comparisons: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

- **Communities.** Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World.

Standard 10. Language Within and Beyond School: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 11. Lifelong Learning: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Which outcome did you assess this academic year?

All of these outcomes were assessed.

How did you assess their skills before, during and / or at the end of the semester / academic year?

The Department of Modern Languages utilizes the following tools to insure comprehensive assessment of Modern Languages goals and objectives for the four-semester sequence and majors and minors:

Review of Syllabi—Our syllabi clearly state goals and objectives. They contain statements of purpose as well as scheduling and grading parameters.

Review of Grade Distribution and GPA index—The Department Chair provides grade distribution studies and G.P.A. indexes to the faculty so that they may assess their individual grading patterns. These tools help determine appropriate grade distribution for each course and guard against grade inflation or deflation. The Chair and other faculty use this information to review and discuss large discrepancies in grade distribution in multiple sections of the same course. This is particularly important in maintaining common standards of achievement for all students enrolled in first or second year language courses.

Review of Teaching in Annual Report—Each full-time faculty member provides an annual report on teaching output; adjunct faculty do this at their discretion. The Department Chair discusses the form with the faculty and writes a written assessment of full-time faculty's work. The report and the assessment are a measure of each instructor's achievements and weaknesses.

Student Evaluations—The Chair reviews student evaluations and distributes them to faculty for review and reconsideration of student needs and faculty's pedagogical methods. In addition the Chair and /or the Language Coordinator meet with adjunct faculty to discuss their student evaluations. Promotion and tenure committees also review the evaluations.

Four-Semester Sequence

- **Coordination—** The Chair and the language coordinators for all language course groups in the Department supervise the instruction and testing of French, Spanish, German, and Italian at the beginning and intermediate levels, aiming to assure student achievement of our objectives. Faculty members who teach these courses meet to discuss the text and exam formats, comparing their respective classroom experiences and grading practices. Adjunct faculty members are provided with a departmental syllabus for the courses they are assigned, and they frequently consult with their language coordinator and other full-time faculty. In these ways, the Department exercises quality control over the basic instructional program in Spanish, French, and German.

- Classroom Visits—The language coordinators each periodically visit each of their adjunct faculty member’s classes to evaluate teaching performance, and the coordinator and instructor subsequently meet to discuss the evaluation. These visits allow for a review of teaching practices and an exchange of ideas and suggestions.
- Tutorial System— Retention and attrition are addressed via a student tutorial system. Advanced students who demonstrate their competence by achieving a minimum B average in their courses can serve as tutors for first and second-year students. The Department pays their wage, and the service is free to students who request it.
- Listening—We monitor and assess student listening proficiency with listening comprehension sections, laboratory activities, chapter exams, via oral exams, and by monitoring students’ classroom activities and reactions to instructors’ instructions. We also assess students’ understanding of texts by having them recycle in written form what they have heard.
- Speaking—Instructors monitor student progress as students speak in pairs and groups in every class. The Department tests students’ oral skills at the middle and end of every semester to monitor progress over the two-year sequence. The testing involves oral and aural skills in different formats.
- Reading—We use formal assessment to evaluate reading skills and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, using short-answer formats in textbook exercises, homework assignments and chapter exams.
- Writing—Samples of student writing are collected throughout the semester. Particular emphasis is placed on multiple versions of journals and compositions. In our basic sequence language courses, all students enrolled, regardless of the class section, complete a number of identical writing assignments. Their work is evaluated according to the same criteria, guaranteeing consistent assessment across sections. The writing component of the four-semester sequence was thoroughly revised in 1996, based on a study financed by a Writing Across the Curriculum mini-grant. The current design is the result of the objectives and results obtained through that study.
- Exit Questionnaire—Students finishing the four-semester Modern Languages program (F250/G250/S250) complete a written assessment of the program, including its curriculum and activities. This exit questionnaire is an important way in which the Department assesses the program each semester.

Minors and Majors

- Portfolio—Students majoring or minoring in Spanish/French each have a portfolio. A portfolio consists of student exhibitions that demonstrate mastery of the skills of inquiry and expression. Credit is given on the basis of what students can actually do in “showing off” their knowledge and know-how. The exhibitions require reading, writing, questioning, speaking, and listening. In those portfolios we include representative materials which allow us to evaluate the level the student has attained in terms of written and oral expression. A portfolio might contain essays written in Spanish/French, translations from English to Spanish/French, or from Spanish/French to English, research papers on literary or cultural topics, and bibliographies for independent reading courses. Audio or video recordings can also be included.
- Annual Progress Interview for Majors— The Department is creating the format for an annual interview with each major to assess and discuss strengths and weaknesses in the Foreign Language. When a student joins the program, a simple questionnaire could help us find out how s/he feels about his/her own competency in the foreign language and his/her strengths and weaknesses. Having thought about past learning experiences that students have had, we can then think about objectives for the coming year. We set objectives which students will be able

to refer to at the end of the year, to assess whether or not they have been met. In this way awareness of initial goals is an important step in the development of self-assessment.

- Written assignments—Written assignments in language-based courses and research papers in literature, civilization, and linguistics courses are used to evaluate the four-year student's progress in the program.
- Capstone course—Each student completes a term paper in the target language as part of a 400-level culture, linguistics, or literature course in the junior or senior year. The capstone paper compels the student to synthesize and expand on the knowledge of culture and language acquired throughout the program. All faculty in the major section (French or Spanish) read the final version of the paper and provide reactions to the capstone instructor and student. Hence, this is another manner in which faculty assess student progress and the effectiveness of Department programs and methods.
- Exit questionnaire—The purpose of this questionnaire is to appreciate the student's evaluation of the major upon graduation.
- Survey of work-status—We contact Departmental alumni to track ways students utilize their language major in the work world.

Please summarize the data you have collected this semester / academic year.

The professors met in the late spring to assess the academic year as a whole.

We discussed the student evaluations of adjunct and full-time faculty.

We devised ways to improve student attendance, by instituting maximum numbers of absences allowed.

Please describe any programmatic changes you have made or are planning to make based on the data you have collected.

Department professors conducted more teaching observations for particular adjunct faculty, given some criticisms on their previous student evaluations. Happily, we find that, after increased supervision and mentoring on our part, as well as after hiring some new teachers, the overall teaching performance of our part-time faculty has improved, and is in nearly all cases very good to excellent, in our estimation. We have assisted and guided more the few instructors who are currently finding ways to improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

We continue to apply our recent change to our Department attendance policy: now only eight absences, no matter what the reason, are allowed. Having more than eight results in automatic failure. The faculty believes that this policy has continued to improve attendance and learning in our courses.

Professors all agree that our languages and cultures lab makes a great contribution to our program, but we believe that a part-time director is needed, given the number of tasks related to running and maintaining the lab. To cover the costs for this position, and also to pay our lab monitors and to purchase vital items such as replacement computers, the Department charges an appropriate lab fee for all 100 and 200-level courses that often meet in the lab. The chairperson worked with Indiana University administrators to find a way to hire a part-time lab director, yet due to many restrictions, this has not been possible. The only option given to us was to hire someone to work part-time, but not to teach at all with us. We feel that consequently such a person would be rather disconnected from Department teaching, only coming in around 10 hours

per week at a relatively low salary. We believe that it is vital that our part-time coordinator also be a teacher in our department. We continue to search for a solution to this situation, since the responsibilities of lab coordination seem to us to be too demanding for any professor to carry out and still meet the other demands of our work.

We have increased our efforts to ensure that graduating seniors complete their exit interviews with us.

The faculty decided that we will tailor our course syllabi more to the new Gen Ed guidelines. We are waiting for these to become completely confirmed before we start to incorporate them into our approaches and our syllabi.

This academic year, the faculty will revisit our overall approach to assessment, and we plan to improve our attention to completing various assessment tools, such as annual progress reports for our majors.

****Note:** Please use this template to provide the responses to the prompts above.**