

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements  
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures/A&S**

**Undergraduate BA Programs in Hispanic Studies and Spanish for International Service  
AY 2015-2016**

**Key Assessment Findings**

*Senior Assessment*

Eight candidates completed senior assessment in Spanish in AY 2015-2016. Three candidates were in Hispanic Studies and 5 in Spanish for International Service. These two groups of students take their senior seminar together.

According to the curriculum revisions put in place in 2013-2014, majors take 1 or 2 research seminars (1 for SIS and 2 for HS) prior to the senior seminar. As a result, we find that when our students are in 489, they have a good idea about what it means to do research. Compared to previous years, this year's students had a better understanding of primary and secondary sources and selected more appropriate sources (see Table 1). Furthermore, because the 489 syllabus provides clearly defined, steps to guide students in completing the senior thesis, students are able to complete the complex task according to the schedule by week 12 of the semester, thus giving them time to prepare for the oral defense and make edits as necessary. This group of students did a good job on project design and organization. Thanks to the weekly feedback student received, students were able to revise their work bit by bit, rather than leaving all the revision to the end, resulting in higher quality of language use in their final papers. 75%-100% of the students were rated meets or exceeds expectations on all evaluation categories.

When examining the few cases where students did not perform as well as expected, we found that one student was a double major who did not delineate her topic adequately. She tried to join her interest in her other major with her Spanish interest and simply was not able to refine her ideas adequately. The second student who received two below expectations ratings was found to have difficulties with her writing and expressing her argument in writing. This student's Spanish was weak. Indeed, her first version of the research paper was deemed not passing, and she worked during weeks 14-15 to make revisions. Her final version was evaluated as passing, but had weaknesses. While this student's language gaps were identified in the fall semester, and her professors and the Spanish advisor tried to work with her, she needed more time to truly make advances in her language proficiency.

**Table 1: Research Paper****Senior Research Paper**

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
<b>1) Language use</b>	3	38%	5	63%	0	0%	2.38	0.52	8
<b>2) Organization and presentation</b>	3	38%	5	63%	0	0%	2.38	0.52	8
<b>3) Writing style</b>	3	38%	4	50%	1	13%	2.25	0.71	8
<b>4) Professional presentation</b>	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	2.25	0.46	8
<b>5) Project design</b>	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	2.25	0.46	8
<b>6) Thesis and argumentation</b>	2	25%	4	50%	2	25%	2.00	0.76	8
<b>7) Analysis and interpretation</b>	1	13%	6	75%	1	13%	2.00	0.53	8
<b>8) Secondary sources</b>	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	2.25	0.46	8

As can be seen in Table 2, students performed quite well on the oral defense of their papers. They had been given the opportunity to “rehearse” as part of the Senior Seminar, and they received specific guidelines about what was expected in the presentation. Between 88% and 100% of the students were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations on the oral presentation. For the students whose written papers had weaknesses, the weakness of the thesis and the project design was again evident, but due to their preparation, the quality of their spoken language was good.

## Oral Presentation of Senior Project (Spanish)

### Oral Presentation

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
<b>1) Project design</b>	1	13%	6	75%	1	13%	2.00	0.53	8
<b>2) Thesis</b>	1	13%	6	75%	1	13%	2.00	0.53	8
<b>3) Organization</b>	3	38%	5	63%	0	0%	2.38	0.52	8
<b>4) Presentation style</b>	6	75%	2	25%	0	0%	2.75	0.46	8
<b>5) Spoken language</b>	3	38%	5	63%	0	0%	2.38	0.52	8

### *Summary and Curricular Improvements*

Overall the Senior Seminar is well structured to provide students the support they need to successfully complete the Hispanic Studies and Spanish for International Service majors. We will continue with the same timetable, requiring the thesis to be completed in week 12, with the remaining weeks devoted to preparation for the oral presentation, the revision of the thesis (as needed) and the public presentation.

This year's seniors expressed the view that prior to 489, they were somewhat confused about what was going to be expected of them in the senior seminar. To remedy this situation, in the fall, we plan to hold a meeting for all Modern Language majors to talk about the senior seminar, the thesis, the oral defense and the public oral presentation, so that all will be "on the same page".