

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements

Department of Modern Language & Literature

Undergraduate Program in French & French Education
Undergraduate Program in German & German Education
Undergraduate Program in Spanish for International Service
Undergraduate Program in Spanish

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**Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Modern Language & Literature
Undergraduate Program in French & French Education**

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- b. Senior Assessment, including oral defense of thesis

Indirect Measures :

- a. Student Evaluations
- b. Program Review by French Faculty

Assessment Findings

Comps	Honor	Dept.	Study	Latin			
Date	Seminar	203	204	Abroad	2 nd major//minor	Honors Prog.	Honors
	Societies	Honors					
04-05	A-/Pass laude, ΦBK	A- Hatzfeld	A	Paris sem.		Triple track	Cum Univ.
Scholar	B/Pass	B+	B+	no	Phil//TRS	Single track	
05-06	A-/Pass laude	A Hatzfeld	A	no		Triple track	Sum. c/
	A-/Pass	A	B+	Paris sem.	//Phil		
	A-/Pass	B+	B+	Paris sem.			
	A-/Pass	A-	A-	(Lyon - h.s.)	Sec. Ed.//Phil		
06-07	F laude	D A-	C A-	no Paris & Lyon			Mag. c/
	A-/Pass laude	B+ Hatzfeld	A-	Paris & Lyon	Sec. Ed.		Mag. c/
07-08	B+/HighPass laude	B Hatzfeld	B	Sem. & Sum.	Sec. Ed.		Cum
	A/Pass	B	B	(posted to Caribb)			
	B/Pass	B+	B	Paris sem.	TRS/math, phil.	Single track	

The French Section analyzed course grades, evaluation, and enrollment data in the gateway courses to the major (202, 204) and in Senior Seminar (452) and Senior Assessment for the four-year period (Fall 2004-Spring 2008). (There were no graduating majors in 2003.) French majors take the Senior Seminar in the fall of their senior year, followed by the Senior Assessment in the

spring. French 452 is a capstone seminar of which the highlight is the writing of a 25-page mini-thesis on a topic of each student's choice under the professor's careful guidance. Students also study one work of literature, and do translations, commentary, and presentations on topics of current interest. In the spring term, the students take a written exam consisting of two parts: an essay on the literary work studied in class and translation and commentary of an article on some aspect of contemporary French culture. They also present an oral defense of their mini-thesis to the French Faculty. Satisfactory completion of French 452 is a grade of C- or better. Since spring 2007, the Faculty have considered the students' performance using rubrics that evaluate all aspects of that performance, which must meet or exceed expectations in several categories in order for them to achieve a passing grade (High Pass/Pass) and to satisfy the University requirement. (See Appendices 1 and 2.) The students generally enjoy the seminar, but they observe that it involves a great deal of work and have suggested that the actual course extend over two semesters. We are considering making this change.

During the 2004-07 period, the enrollment in French 452 varied from two to four students. The majority of these students displayed good to excellent performance (B to A), except in 2006 when one student was failed for having plagiarized a substantial portion of her thesis. The average grade in this course hovered around 3.54, except in 2006, when the results of the failing student skewed the average. We found that the grades obtained in French 203 and 204 were a reliable indicator for future performance.

In considering our students' performance in the Senior Seminar and the Senior Assessment, we took into account whether they had studied abroad or not. Although study in a francophone country is not a requirement, it is strongly encouraged, especially for the joint French/Secondary Education majors. Five of our twelve students during this period spent at least a semester in Paris, and two spent an entire year in France (one semester in Paris and one in Lyon). Two students who did not go abroad while at CUA had lived abroad previously: one attended high school in Lyon, and the other was posted as a priest to a francophone country in the Caribbean. We have been somewhat disappointed to see that while the stay abroad widens the students' horizons and improves their oral proficiency, their written French does not improve as dramatically as we might expect. We did note that, predictably, the two students who spent an entire academic year in France made the most progress, but another factor was the excellent quality of the two programs they were with in Paris and Lyon. We believe that the students who spend only one semester abroad should be able to learn much more than they do if they are with a good program that places them at the right level and in good families. The complaints we have received from students who went with our most popular program in Paris have motivated us to work with CUAbroad to find better opportunities.

In evaluating the accomplishments of our French majors, we noted that many attempted very challenging curricula while at CUA. Three of the twelve were in the joint French/Secondary Education program, two chose double majors (Philosophy and TRS), and four minored in Philosophy. A third of our majors were in the Honors Program: two completed three integrated sequences of four courses each (Humanities, Philosophy, Social Sciences) and two did a single sequence.

Nearly half of our majors earned Latin honors: one graduated Summa cum Laude, two Magna cum Laude, and two cum Laude. Two were University Scholars, four were elected to Phi Beta

Kappa and four to Phi Eta Sigma, the freshman honor society. Finally, the Helmut A. Hatzfeld Award for Excellence in the study of French was given to our best student each of the four years.

For the past three years, the French Faculty has been engaged in a threefold curriculum reform:

- To improve the articulation between the courses comprising the language requirement (103-104) and those representing the gateway to the major (203-204). Crucial to the accomplishment of this goal has been the involvement of one of our regular faculty in the teaching and supervision of 103-104 and the attempt to make our French lecturers feel that they have a real stake in our developing program.
- To attract greater numbers to the French major and minor. Those who teach 103, 104, 203, and 204 are most instrumental in identifying promising students and convincing them to consider a major or minor in French. Many students would like to double major in, for example, French and Politics (or Business and Economics or International Relations) in order to increase their job prospects, but they are hampered by the fact that these other departments have many requirements and appear unwilling to make special arrangements for double majors. We intend to engage in discussions with the Chairs of these departments in order to change this situation. We have also considering offering a separate track in the major, French for International Studies, on the model of the existing Spanish for International Studies.
- To improve students' learning by making them more cognizant of what their goals should be and what should be steady progress toward those goals. Every course description in our program sets out clearly what the students should be able to do upon completion of the course, but it does not hold them responsible for having mastered various points of French grammar, partly because such mastery is achieved only over several years. In spring 2008, we inaugurated an event for new majors in both French and Spanish designed not only to inform the students about what lay ahead but also to convince them that they need to take some responsibility for their own learning. They completed a Self-Assessment form to enable them to reflect on their present level and what their future goals should be. We may institute an oral proficiency exam that would certify our majors' level upon completion of their studies.

**French Major Assessment
Appendix 1**

**Evaluation Rubric for French Senior Thesis
Spring 2007**

	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Does not meet expectations
Topic	Topic clearly delineated; appropriate for assignment; lends itself to critical inquiry; interesting/engaging	Topic clear; evidence of limiting topic to make it manageable and interesting to audience	Topic not well delineated; too broad or too narrow; not
Content	Information rich, detailed, relevant; convincingly supports ideas; demonstrates critical analysis; opens up avenues for further investigation/reflection	Information adequate, most ideas developed, some ideas may not be fully supported; recognizes different perspectives and is generally convincing	Information limited; ideas not developed; important details lacking; may present only one side of the issue
Treatment of	Cultural products and	Cultural products and	Cultural products or

culture	practices placed into dialogue with each other and clearly situated within larger social and political perspectives	practices emphasized; perspectives mentioned	practices dominate without adequate sociohistorical context
Sources	Wide variety and impressive number of appropriate sources used; well integrated into arguments; cited correctly	Good variety and number of appropriate sources used; evidence of critical selection of sources; effort to integrate them smoothly; cited correctly	Few sources or lack of variety of sources; may be inappropriate due to bias; may be awkwardly integrated; may not be cited properly
Organization	Clear, logical organization, with well-formed paragraphs, introduction, supporting evidence and conclusion; smooth transitions lead reader effortlessly	Logical organization and basic form (paragraphs, introduction, body, conclusion); evidence of planning and revising but some areas may not be smoothly constructed	Lack of organization or formal structure impedes comprehension
Language use	Native-like control of major tenses, frequently-used and less often used constructions; follows conventions of written French	Good control of major tenses and frequently used constructions; may have some errors in less frequent structures; follows most conventions of written French	Errors in major tense use and in frequently-used constructions; inattentive to conventions of written French
Vocabulary	Extensive vocabulary; precise usage; no influence from English	Adequate vocabulary to address topic; some interference from English may occur	Weak vocabulary prevents clear communication of ideas

**French Major Assessment
Appendix 2**

**Evaluation Guidelines for French Senior Oral Defense
Senior Comprehensive Exam**

	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Does not meet expectations
Content of thesis summary	Clearly and thoroughly communicates content of thesis	Presents main ideas of thesis; ideas mostly clear	Incomplete; thesis not clearly represented
Organization	Introduction gets audience attention, main points are clear, supporting material is logical, conclusion is satisfying; smooth transitions	Introduction and conclusion are present but may not be well-developed; main points are clear but supporting material may not be adequate; effort to use transitions	Introduction/conclusion may be undeveloped; supporting arguments incomplete; lacking transitions
Non-verbal effectiveness	Delivery is natural, confident, enhances the message; eye contact/tone appropriate; engages audience; limited filler words used	Delivery generally effective; eye-contact/tone generally appropriate; some hesitancy; interests audience; filler words not distracting; some dependence on notes	Delivery detracts from the message; eye contact limited; fails to engage audience; filler words excessive; over-dependence on notes
Pronunciation	Pronunciation and speed is native-like; pauses appropriate; volume and clarity excellent	Pronunciation generally free from strongly marked sounds; mostly effective use of pauses; speech mostly clear and audible	Pauses affect overall comprehension; marked pronunciation detracts from message; speech inaudible or mumbled
Comprehension of questions	Understands questions posed; asks for clarifications in native-like way	Understands most questions posed; may need repetition of 1-2 questions; clarification requests adequate	Does not understand several of the questions asked and may not request clarification appropriately; needs multiple repetitions
Response to questions	Responded appropriately at sufficient length	Responded appropriately though some answers needed further clarification; used appropriate strategies to communicate when lexical gaps occurred	Some responses not on target; unable to respond to some questions
Reflectiveness	Able to analyze thesis critically and identify areas for future study or for improvements	Able to point out some areas for improvement in thesis or areas for future study; may need some prompting	Limited ability to self-evaluate or see ways to improve or further develop thesis, even with prompting

Joint Foreign Language/Secondary Education Program

Students in the Spanish/French/German and Secondary Education Joint Program have several additional assessments. To evaluate speaking proficiency, candidates complete an online

interview in the sophomore and senior years, with the desired outcome being intermediate for the first interview and advanced for the second. Feedback in the form of a checklist and comments is provided to the student on both exams. At the completion of the program, candidates are required to take the official ACTFL Advanced level check phone interview, with the desired outcome of Advanced. As required for District of Columbia certification, French and Spanish candidates also take the Praxis 2, which tests all language skills as well as content knowledge.

Assessment Findings

The procedure described above was initiated in fall 2004. Since that time, five students have completed their degrees in the Joint Program. Four of the five have received ratings of Advanced from ACTFL on the oral interview (one candidate did not take the OPI). Given the steady progress these students have made toward the final assessment, we feel our procedures are working well to guide students toward the desired outcome level.

All of the candidates have passed the Praxis 2 exam as well (results are tracked by the Dept. of Education).

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
A (Spn)	Int. high		Adv/*			
B (Frm)	Adv.		Adv/Adv			
C(Frm)		Int.		Adv/Adv		
D (Spn)			Int		Adv/Adv high	
E (Frm)			Int		Adv/Adv mid	
F (Ger)				Int		**/**

*Did not take exam

** Will complete assessments in spring 2009

**Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Modern Language & Literature
Undergraduate Program in German & German Education**

Direct Measures:

- a. Completion of Senior Seminar
- b. Comprehensive Examination

Indirect Measures:

- a. Student Evaluations of the German Program
- b. Program Review by German Faculty

Assessment Findings:

Comps	Result	Seminar	352	351	302	301	204	203	Abroad	2ndmajor	minor	Honors
Sp2001	Pass	B+	B+	B+	A	B-	B+	B		Music		
Sp 2003	Pass	B	A-	A		B+	A	A-	Semester Eichstätt			
Sp 2004	High Pass	A	A	A	A	A		A-	Semester Eichstätt	Business Finance		
Sp 2004	High Pass	A-		A	A	A-	A	A-	Semester Eichstätt	Politics		Single tr. Magna Cum Laude
Sp 2004	Pass	B		B		B	A	A-	Sem. Bonn Summer Eichstätt	Secondary Educ.		
Sp 2005	Pass	B	B	B	B		A-	A-	Sem. Bonn	Politics		
Sp 2005	Pass	A-		B+	B+	B+	A	A-	Su Eichst	Music		
Sp 2006	Pass	A		B+	B+	B	A	A-	SemBerlin	Hist,Art minor		Honors Pr
Comps	Results	Seminar	352	351	392	91	204	203	Abroad	2ndmajor		
Sp 2009			B-	A-		A	A	A	Su Eichst. SemBerlin	Secondary Educ		

Enrollment: In these years the German Program suffered from change and lack of faculty. One Assistant Professor position was not refilled for two years following the resignation of a member of the German faculty. Another position was filled with an interim appointment. The lack of continuity and diverse course offerings resulted in a loss of majors and minors. With a tenure track hiring Fall 2007 the situation has now stabilized. Students are coming back to the major or entering the program as Freshmen.

Outcomes: In order to evaluate the outcomes of the capstone seminar (German 452) and the Comprehensive Examination, some information is provided in the table about the qualifications of the majors and their progression through the language sequence and the gateway courses in literature and culture which lay the basis for successful completion of the program (German 301, 302, German 351,352).

In addition, a positive outcome depends on the language preparation of students as they enter the program and the intensive training they receive during study abroad.

The academic standing of German majors is frequently defined by their participation in the Honors Program and by their completion of a double major or multiple minor fields.

Examples from 2004:

1. Student from East European background is promoted to the literature level after one semester of third year language. She reaches a near native level of oral proficiency with a semester at Eichsttt, completes a double major with Business/Finance, and achieves a 4.) in the Program. The High Pass assessment of the Comprehensive Exam comes as no surprise.
2. Student enters the program at the Intermediate level after good high school preparation. A highly motivated double major with Politics and an Honors student, he qualifies for the semester abroad in Eichstatt and receives a High Pass in the Comprehensive Exam.
3. Student comes well prepared from high school into the Intermediate level, but is less ambitious and interested mostly in the language which she plans to teach. She spends a semester abroad in Bonn in a program not taught exclusively in German.

The comprehensive exam is drafted with input from faculty who taught the student. It is reviewed by all German faculty members who make an independent judgment about the quality of each section and discuss the overall assessment.

Program Review: The curriculum of the Senior Seminar is set on the basis of student preparation. Since there is a variation caused by participation in individual study abroad programs, the Seminar has to take into account the strengths and needs of each group or individual. Grades for required courses are missing the table above, if classes in Germany were substituted.

Students have a direct input. Their course evaluations are carefully read. An exit interview requests suggestions for adjustments to the course offerings. The interests of the students in particular areas of German Studies and their double major or minor fields are taken into account in the selection of Senior Seminar projects and/or Thesis topics.

Improvements: The most important step toward improvement of the program is a strengthening of language proficiency that would enable students to work at an advanced level in literature and culture studies. A plan of studies that includes a year

of intensive language study for major/minors has not yet been implemented because of the size of the program and financial restrictions.

Reading lists and courses are periodically examined to update content in two ways: placing a stronger emphasis on contemporary Germany, and extending the intellectual inquiry to Germany within European and global culture.

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Modern Language & Literature
Undergraduate Program in Spanish for International Service

Assessment Measures

The Spanish for International Service major uses the following measures to assess the program's learning outcomes:

- Capstone projects written in Spanish
- Public presentation of capstone research findings (in Spanish) before a panel of Spanish faculty
- Comprehensive examinations
- Grades, course evaluations and enrollment totals for upper-level required courses
- Student perception surveys

Assessment Findings

Coordinating Seminar:

The Department of Modern Languages analyzed course grade, evaluation and enrollment data in SPAN 462 Coordinating Seminar Spanish for International Service (SIS) for a five-year period (Spring 2004 through Spring 2007). Data from the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement was used as a benchmark against data from Modern Language seniors in 2007. Certain data is collected of all Modern Language majors and not broken down by languages or programs, so not all of our analyses are specific to the SIS program.

Satisfactory performance in the SIS Coordinating Seminar (a grade of C- or better) including the completion and oral defense of the capstone research project, and on the comprehensive examination is used in satisfying the University's graduation requirement. The capstone project and public defense was introduced in Spring 2007 with a concomitant reduction in the length of the comprehensive exam.

During this period, enrollment has remained steady, averaging seven students per year. This low faculty/student ratio allows for a great deal of personal attention and student participation in the seminar. Student appraisal of the course is strongly positive, averaging 8.63 on a 10-point scale; ratings for the instructor are extremely positive, averaging 9.49 on a 10-point scale.

Almost universally, students who enroll in the Coordinating Seminar display good to exceptional performance (B- to A+). The one exception during this five-year period was a student who earned a failing grade two years in a row (2003-2004). Given the rubrics attached to the A, B and C levels in the course as explained in the program statement, the data supports the conclusion that we are achieving our goals for this program. This conclusion is reinforced by data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey of Spring 2007 graduates shows

significantly higher number of assignments that required analyzing ideas, experiences or theories and "making judgements about the value of information, arguments and methods" than at Carnegie peer institutions. Modern Language graduates valued their education's contribution to developing their ability to think critically and analytically (mean 3.72 on a 4-point scale) versus Carnegie Peers at 3.32.

Because of its rigor and interdisciplinary nature, the Spanish for International Service program tends to attract accomplished and ambitious students. Of the 25 graduates of the program in the five-year period between AY 2003-2004 and AY 2007-2008, 16 of them have received University Honors, that is, 64%—a very high percentage of these completing a double major.

Program assessment:

While we are justifiably proud of our graduates, many of whom have gone on to careers in government, public service, the law and other fields, given the importance and relevance of Spanish in today's environment, we believe that the SIS and Spanish majors can and should be attracting many more majors than is currently the case.

To increase the attractiveness of the major and better meet the needs of our students, we are currently reviewing curriculum design, the sequencing and articulation of courses and course scheduling. We expect that the new curricular structure will give students more flexibility while ensuring that they have a firm foundation in their subject area. Major changes to the SIS curriculum can be expected to be approved in the next few months.

Additionally the faculty feel that it would be helpful both for our students and for ongoing self-evaluation of our program outcomes to have graduating students take an independently-administered OPI-style language proficiency exam. Although such exams do entail significant cost, they are an invaluable and objective yardstick to measure student achievement in language skills.

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Modern Language & Literature
Undergraduate Program in Spanish for International Service

Assessment Measures

The Spanish major uses the following measures to assess the program's learning outcomes:

- Capstone project (significant term paper) written in Spanish
- Weekly in-class presentations in the Coordinating Seminar
- Comprehensive examinations
- Grades, course evaluations and enrollment totals for upper-level required courses
- Student perception surveys

Assessment Findings

Coordinating Seminar:

The Department of Modern Languages analyzed course grade, evaluation and enrollment data in SPAN 452 Coordinating Seminar Spanish for a five-year period (Spring 2004 through Spring 2008). Because this seminar is also taken by students in the Spanish for Secondary Education program, not all of this data pertains solely to Spanish students. Data from the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement was used as a benchmark against data from Modern Language seniors in 2007. Certain data is collected of all Modern Language majors and not broken down by languages or programs, so not all of our analyses are specific to the Spanish program.

Satisfactory performance in the Spanish Coordinating Seminar (a grade of C- or better) including weekly in-class presentations, a mid-term exam, and a lengthy term paper, and on the comprehensive examination is used in satisfying the University's graduation requirement. The comprehensive examination is a 6-hour exam testing the student's mastery of subject knowledge, writing ability in Spanish and facility in the close reading and analysis of Spanish-language literary texts.

During the period under evaluation, enrollment has fluctuated between 4 and 2. The total number of Spanish program graduates for the period is 8. The small class sizes, however, mean that student evaluation data for the course is scarce, due to the University policy of not requiring (nor providing) evaluation forms for courses with enrollment below 6. The small sample size and high standard deviation make the student evaluation data suspect.

Almost universally, students who enroll in the Coordinating Seminar display good to exceptional performance (B- to A+). Given the rubrics attached to the A, B and C levels in the course as explained in the program statement, the data supports the conclusion that we are achieving our goals for this program. This conclusion is reinforced by data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey of Spring 2007 graduates shows significantly higher

number of assignments that required analyzing ideas, experiences or theories and "making judgements about the value of information, arguments and methods" than at Carnegie peer institutions. Modern Language graduates valued their education's contribution to developing their ability to think critically and analytically (mean 3.72 on a 4-point scale) versus Carnegie Peers at 3.32.

Because of its rigor and interdisciplinary nature, the Spanish program tends to attract accomplished and ambitious students. Of the 8 graduates of the program in the five-year period between AY 2003-2004 and AY 2007-2008, 6 of them have received University Honors, that is, 75%—a very high percentage of these completing a double major.

Program assessment:

While we are justifiably proud of our graduates, many of whom have gone on to careers in education, public service, the law and other fields, given the importance and relevance of Spanish in today's environment, we believe that the SIS and Spanish majors can and should be attracting many more majors than is currently the case.

To increase the attractiveness of the major and better meet the needs of our students, we are currently reviewing curriculum design, the sequencing and articulation of courses and course scheduling. We expect that the new curricular structure will give students more flexibility while ensuring that they have a firm foundation in their subject area. Major changes to the Spanish curriculum can be expected to be approved in the next few months.

Additionally the faculty feel that it would be helpful both for our students and for ongoing self-evaluation of our program outcomes to have graduating students take an independently-administered OPI-style language proficiency exam. Although such exams do entail significant cost, they are an invaluable and objective yardstick to measure student achievement in language skills.