

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): French M.A.

Department: Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Degree or Certificate Level: M.A.

College/School: Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2021

Assessment Contact: Cassandra Hamrick

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY 2020-2021

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2018

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

"Student will demonstrate a command of written and oral French."

Please note that this outcome statement was also listed in the Assessment Annual Report for last year. However, the subject of the assessment was different. The report for AY 2019-2020 concerned the deletion of a course that was formally a required class (FREN 5100) in the French M.A. curriculum. This year we are examining student outcomes connected with the Final Project and Exams that are a part of the completion of the French M.A. degree.

Following Marissa Cope's recommendation in her "Feedback" report of July 21, 2020, we have separated out "the two skills sought: written French and oral French" in order to examine each component more carefully. The present report concerns the written component. We hope to take up the assessment of Learning Outcomes dealing with the Oral French component in a future report.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe and identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

The artifacts used were the Final written exam or the Final project produced at the end of the French M.A. program. Mention of this "Direct measure" of assessment is indicated in our "Program Assessment Plan": "Written exam or final project at end of French M.A. Program." Students choose to write either a final project or to take a written exam based on the French M.A. reading list. The artifacts are not collected from previous classes, nor used in an offering on-line.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (do not just refer to the assessment plan).

The process begins when the student first chooses to prepare either the written final project or a written exam based on the Graduate Reading List. The student forms a committee consisting of a "Chair" or Mentor, and at least two other graduate faculty members. The student makes a short presentation on the final project and answers questions pertaining to the project. Students opting to prepare the questions based on the Reading List present the essays they wrote in response to the questions that had been submitted. The Committee's evaluation of the candidate's final project or essays takes into account the quality of the writing as well as the content of the project or essays, when the

candidate chooses the Reading List (please see in this regard the *Graduate Student Handbook* of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

The results show that for the most part, that the assessment process continues to benefit the program. The data obtained in 2020 - 2021 indicate that the majority of the students understand the criteria that define the program and are successfully working within the parameters of the competency expected of our students. The assessment took into consideration two of the major aspects of the final written component. The first rubric concerned the organization and clarity of the final project, while the second rubric concerned the accuracy and quality of the French language employed. In the area of the overall organization of the final written project or exam, outcomes were assessed according to the following criteria:

- *The objective of the project or essay is clearly stated;*
- *Appropriate sources and references are implemented correctly;*
- *A clear progression of pertinent points and arguments is evident;*
- *The conclusion logically follows up on the stated objectives.*

The second rubric concerned Student Learning Outcomes with respect to the use of French and were measured in terms of the student's demonstrated abilities as shown below:

Language Function:

- Narrates and describes fully and accurately in all major time frames;
- Can discuss abstract topics;

Text Type:

- Uses appropriately formal language in extended discourse;
- Is able to construct and defend a critical argument;

Comprehensibility:

- Is understood by native audiences unaccustomed to interacting with non-natives;

Language Control:

- Uses precise vocabulary corresponding to the context of the topic discussed;
- Generally maintains grammatical and syntactical accuracy; there is no extended pattern of error.

The investigation revealed some interesting and useful information. Regarding the preferred organizational plan for an essay or a formal project, 80% of the students in our test group exceeded expectations, whereas in the case of "Language Control" (the ability to align vocabulary according to the context discussed, thereby maintaining accuracy), only 20% of the group "exceeded expectations", and 20% of the same group had only "minimal expectations" of maintaining a good level of language control. These wide-spread scores are revealing of the challenges that language can have for writers, teachers, speakers, and particularly non-naïve speakers, and of the importance of assessment in determining how to align curriculum with goals and needs.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

The data suggest that some realignment could be beneficial for the program, and in particular for teachers of French in our program.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

It is only within the past year that we have had a number of graduate students in our program who have been completing the M.A. in French. We are looking forward to studying our findings more closely at the upcoming French faculty meeting this month and to examine how best to move forward.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The above example is

The recent challenges we have experienced in the face of COVID and the need to limit contact have made it difficult to move forward with new initiatives in recent months. We are looking forward to new opportunities to engage in action that will benefit the graduate programs in particular.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

The elimination of FREN 5100 as a required course in the French M.A. program came as a result of the study we made of the French curriculum. It has brought more flexibility to scheduling and opened a broader space for innovation in the curriculum.

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

I believe that this most recent assessment has proved to be a move toward a broader discussion of how to best to address and to serve the language needs of our graduate students.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

This is an on-going initiative.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

Through dialogue and exchange of ideas.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.

I have incorporated this aspect of the report into the above text, in order to make the assessment initiative process clearer. Please see p. 2.

Thank you for your generous help.

Cassandra Hamrick