

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Italian Studies	Department: Languages, Literatures & Cultures
Degree or Certificate Level: B.A. in Italian Studies	College/School: Arts & Sciences
Date (Month/Year): June 2020	Primary Assessment Contact: Dr. Simone Bregni simone.bregni@slu.edu 314-977-2617

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? A.Y. 2019-2020

In what year was the program’s assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? A.Y. 2018-2019

Narrative

The Italian Studies program is inter/multidisciplinary in nature. The focus of the Italian Studies Major is the development of linguistic and cultural proficiency within a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary context. Students are also strongly encouraged to select a second major.

The Italian Studies program also contributes to the A&S Core Foreign Language Requirement and offers many courses that contribute to other components of the A&S Core (Literature, Global Citizenship, Fine Arts). Since Fall 2016, as approved by the curriculum committee, the Italian Studies B.A. requires 30 credits (previously 27) and it now includes ITAL 2010, Intermediate Italian – Language & Culture. ITAL 2010 is also the last course in the A&S 3-semester LLC Core requirement. As of the current academic year, we identify ITAL 2010 as the starting point for our majors and minors (while bearing in mind that it also includes non-majors). So, since fall 2016 the Italian Studies program intentionally looks at ITAL 2010 as the “point of departure” for the B.A. in Italian Studies.

In terms of communication in the target language (interpersonal, presentational and interpretive communication), B.A. students in the Italian Studies program (like for other LLC Romance & Germanic languages) are assessed at the **Intermediate-High** level on the ACTFL scale.

In **A.Y. 2018-2019**, the Italian Studies program decided to revise and update outcomes assessment strategies and procedures based on feedback received from the Dean’s office and the University Assessment Coordinator. We decided that assessing all five outcomes (interpersonal communication, presentational communication, interpretive communication; intercultural competence and connections) was unnecessary. So, as of fall 2018, the two active-productive skills in foreign language acquisition, Speaking and Writing, are now assessed focusing on two outcomes, **interpersonal communication (Oral)** and **presentational communication (Written)**, plus **intercultural competence** (as it emerges from both). See the attached templates and rubrics.

We also decided to perform outcomes assessment as follows:

- In ITAL 2010, third semester Italian (last semester of the A&S Foreign Language Core Requirement), as the starting point of the Italian B.A. – Students are assessed at the **Intermediate-Low** level on the ACTFL scale.
- In ITAL 3020, fifth semester Italian, as the mid-point of the Italian B.A. – Students are assessed at the **Intermediate-Mid** level on the ACTFL scale
- In the last semester of coursework at SLU (what used to be ITAL 4950, for zero credits, eliminated once LLC removed all courses for zero credits) students are required to attend two mandatory assessment sessions, a final **oral interview** and a discussion of a brief **writing portfolio**. Students are assessed at the **Intermediate-High** level on the ACTFL scale.

Since the Italian Studies program is inter/multidisciplinary in nature, and the focus of the Italian Studies Major is the development of linguistic and cultural proficiency within a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary context, assessing the last semester allows us to measure the impact of the variety of ITAL 3XXX and 4XXX courses (not limited to ITAL 3010/3020 and 4010/4020, which students may take abroad) that students may be taking.

A.Y. 2019-2020 marks the beginning of a new four-year cycle, as follows:

- A.Y. 2019-2020 was the first year.
- A.Y. 2020-2021 will be the mid-point.
- A.Y. 2021-2022 will be the third year.
- A.Y. 2022-2023 will conclude the four-year cycle.

Data will be collected, analyzed and discussed at the end of each year. Changes, if necessary, will be implemented each year, as needed. A report will be created at the end of each academic year. A more thorough analysis will be performed at the end of spring 2021 as the midpoint in the assessment cycle. A final analysis will be performed in spring 2023 as the final point of the four-year cycle.

Outcomes (interpersonal communication, presentational communication and intercultural competence) were assessed through **direct measures** (testing and oral interview/presentation in ITAL 2010 and 3020; oral interview and short writing portfolio in the last semester of coursework) and **indirect measures** (an exit survey).

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

Since fall 2018 (see above, Narrative), the two active-productive skills in foreign language acquisition, Speaking and Writing, are now assessed focusing on two (out of the possible five) outcomes, interpersonal communication (Oral) and presentational communication (Written), plus intercultural competence. Intercultural competence, in fact, is assessed not as a separate entity, but as specifically connected to/emerging from Interpersonal communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written), which we find more consistent with the modes of foreign language and culture acquisition. See the updated attached templates and rubrics.

2. Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

Which student artifacts were used to determine if students achieved this outcome? Please 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.

OUTCOMES (3):

- Interpersonal communication (Oral);

- Presentational communication (Written);

- Intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is now assessed not as a separate entity, but specifically as connected to/emerging from Interpersonal communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written) and inserted in each corresponding rubric. It is, in fact, by communicating (orally and/or in writing) that students demonstrate acquisition of intercultural competence.

Outcomes were assessed through direct measures and indirect measures, as follows:

- ITAL 2010, fall 2019 - Direct measures: testing (final oral interview/presentation & final written exam). Indirect measures: exit survey.

Proficiency level assessed: Intermediate-Low level on the ACTFL scale.

- ITAL 3020, spring 2020 - Direct measures: testing (final oral interview/presentation & final written exam). Indirect measures: exit survey.

Proficiency level assessed: Intermediate-Mid level on the ACTFL scale.

- Last semester of B.A. coursework at SLU (formerly ITAL 4950, for zero credits), Fall 2019 (one candidate), Spring 2020 (one candidate). Direct measures: testing (oral interview and short writing portfolio). Indirect measures: exit survey.

Proficiency level assessed: Intermediate-High level on the ACTFL scale.

Madrid: Italian is not taught at the Madrid campus (it has not been taught in over 8 years).

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the student artifacts, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

- Rubrics, updated in A.Y. 2018-2019 to reflect changes/modifications (attached to the same email as this report), were used.
- Data were collected, compiled, analyzed and discussed internally.
- All faculty in Italian Studies were involved. Full-time faculty compiled, analyzed and discussed data. The full-time faculty proposed and discussed changes. The program coordinator implemented said changes.

The Italian Studies Program Coordinator regularly compiles the results of both the direct and indirect measures across the program in order to gain insight into the progress made by students, the success of instruction and needs for improvement. The Coordinator reports to, and consults with, the Italian faculty at the end of each academic year with recommendations for changes or improvements to the curriculum, implementation and assessment plan. Any recommendations for improvements to the culture component of the course are reported at the end of the academic year to the Department Chair and the program. The faculty also regularly liaises with community partners who provide opportunities for community engagement and cultural experiences to students (e.g. the cultural and community engagement activities of the Italian Club of St. Louis, the Saint Louis International Film Festival, etc.).

- As in the past, students were involved in the assessment feedback-loop on a regular basis by receiving on-going feedback on their progress and participating in self-assessments. For example, students are able to evaluate their own progress in oral interpersonal communication through feedback on oral proficiency evaluations, and their progress on written presentational communication through instructor feedback on their projects/finals. In addition, at the end of ITAL 2010, at the end of ITAL 3020, and during their last semester of B.A. coursework at SLU, students complete an exit survey in which they are asked to assess their progress.
- The Italian Studies outcomes assessment plans and results are published yearly on the A&S Dean’s office webpage. They are publicly visible.

An executive summary is compiled for the Dean’s office at the end of each academic year.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcomes? 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)?

Culture acquisition), as per ACTFL standards, the assigned benchmark for meeting and exceeding criteria is 80%.

ITAL 2010 – Assessed in fall 2019 (not offered in spring 2020) – Assessment Data

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
13	Interpersonal communication (Oral)	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)	2 (15.3%)
	& Intercultural Competence	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)	2 (15.3%)

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome

6	Presentational communication (Written)	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)	2 (15.3%)
	& Intercultural Competence	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)	2 (15.3%)

Comments:

The assigned benchmark for meeting and exceeding criteria is 80%: students are required to show acquisition of speaking, writing and intercultural skills that correspond to at least 80% of the materials included in the course.

Direct assessment results:

- *In spring 2020, ITAL 2010 was not taught.*
- *In A.Y. 2019-2020, 84.5% of our students met or exceeded criteria for Interpersonal Communication (Oral), Presentational Communication (Written) and Intercultural Competence.*

Indirect assessment results:

The exit surveys corroborate the positive outcomes from the direct assessment measures. However, response rate was low (lower than usual. We have met and discussed strategies to improve exit survey response rates in the future).

- In the Fall 2019 survey, students' response rate was 30.7% [= 4 students out of 13 in the class took the survey]. Students' perception of how much the Italian language Core requirement courses have helped them substantially improve their language skills was very high. In the four language production skills students agree or strongly agree that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100 %**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. **50% strongly agreed** on all of the above. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8) **100%** of the students agree or strongly agree that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries. **50% strongly agreed.**
- In Spring 2020 ITAL 2010 was not taught.
- **In the Academic Year 2019-2020**, in the four language production skills students agree or strongly agree that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100 %**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8) **100%** of the students agree or strongly agree that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries.

Conclusions:

In the academic year 2019-2020, **84.5%** of students in ITAL 2010 attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-Low**. Most students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-Low level. The class also included students who had already studied abroad in Italy. 23% had studied Italian in high school.

ITAL 3020 – Assessed in spring 2020 (not offered in fall 2019) – Assessment Data

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
6	Interpersonal communication (Oral) & Intercultural Competence	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.6%)	0 (0%)

		6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
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Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
6	Presentational communication (Written)	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.6%)	0 (0%)
	&			
	Intercultural Competence	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Comments:

The assigned benchmark for meeting and exceeding criteria is 80%: students are required to show acquisition of speaking, writing and intercultural skills that correspond to at least 80% of the materials included in the course.

Direct assessment results:

- *In fall 2019 ITAL 3020 was not taught.*
- *In A.Y. 2019-2020, 100% of our students met (16.6%) or exceeded (83.3%) criteria for Interpersonal Communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written). 100% of our students exceeded criteria for Intercultural Competence.*

Indirect assessment results:

The exit survey corroborates the positive outcomes from the direct assessment measures. However, response rate was very low (much lower than usual. We believe it is a consequence of the COVID-19 emergency.

- In the spring 2020 survey, students' response rate was 16.6% [= 1 students out of 6 in the class took the survey]. The student's perception of how much the Italian language Core requirement courses have helped them substantially improve their language skills was very high. In the four language production skills the student strongly agreed that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100%**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8) student agreed or strongly agreed that s/he understands and knows more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries.
- In fall 2019 ITAL 3020 was not taught.
- **In the Academic Year 2019-2020**, in the four language production skills, the one responding student strongly agree that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100%**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8), the student strongly agreed that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries.

Conclusions:

In the academic year 2019-2020, **100%** of students in ITAL 3020 attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-Mid**. All students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-Mid level.

ITAL B.A. – Last Semester of Coursework (formerly ITAL 4950 – Capstone for 0 Credits) – F19-S20 Assessment Data

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
2	Interpersonal	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)

	communication (Oral) & Intercultural Competence	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
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Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
2	Presentational communication (Written) & Intercultural Competence	1 (50%) 2 (100%)	1 (50%) 0 (0%)	0 (0%) 0 (0%)

Comments:

The assigned benchmark for meeting and exceeding criteria is 80%: students are required to show acquisition of speaking, writing and intercultural skills that correspond to at least 80% of the materials included in the Italian Studies B.A.: Intermediate-High on the ACTFL scale.

Direct assessment results:

- *In fall 2019 one student graduated with an Italian Studies B.A.*
- *In spring 2020, one student graduated with an Italian Studies B.A.*
- *In A.Y. 2019-2020 **100%** of our students met (50%) or exceeded (50%) criteria for Interpersonal Communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written). **100%** of our students exceeded criteria for Intercultural Competence.*

Indirect assessment results:

The exit survey corroborates the positive outcomes from the direct assessment measures.

- *In the Spring 2020 survey, students' response rate was 50% [= 1 student out of 2 in the graduating class took the survey]. Student's perception of how much the Italian language Core requirement courses have helped them substantially improve their language skills was very high. In the four language production skills, the student strongly agreed that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100%**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8) the student strongly agreed that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries.*
- ***In the Academic Year 2019-2020**, in the four language production skills, the one responding student (50% of graduating students) strongly agreed that they significantly improved their skills: listening **100%**, speaking **100%**, reading **100%**, writing **100%**. On the questions pertaining to culture (questions 6-8), the one responding student (50% of graduating students) strongly agreed that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries.*

Conclusions:

In the academic year 2019-2020, **100%** of majors graduating with an Italian Studies B.A. attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-High**. All students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-High level.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

ITAL 2010 – Starting point of the B.A. in Italian Studies

In the academic year 2019-2020, **84.5%** of students in ITAL 2010 attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-Low**. Most students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-Low level. The class also included students who had already studied abroad in Italy. 23% had studied Italian in high school. These elements show that we are effective in our students' placement. Students with previous exposure to Italian are placed according to their level, and not below or above.

Students who met or exceeded expectations in Intercultural Competence demonstrate the effectiveness of our extra-curricular cultural activities: all students in this class who met or exceeded expectations were actively involved in our extra-curricular cultural activities (Italian Club and Italian Table/Conversation Hour).

We believe that the 15.3% (two students) who did not meet expectations points to flaws in the academic advising system. This has been a recurring problem. The students were re-directed to Italian after failing Spanish. Students showed no real interest in, nor commitment to, Italian. They appeared to have been given the information that Italian was “easy” and that they would “pass” without any real commitment/effort. That was not the case.

ITAL 3020 – Midpoint of the B.A. in Italian Studies

In the academic year 2019-2020, **100%** of students in ITAL 3020 attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-Mid**. All students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-Mid level. The class also included one student who had already studied abroad in Italy, and three students who had undergone placement into 2010 in fall 2019. These elements show that we are effective in our students' placement. Students with previous exposure to Italian are placed according to their level, and not below or above.

- All students exceeded expectations in Intercultural Competence. We believe that this happened for two reasons:

- In 2018-2019, we decided to restructure our 3010/3020 (and 4010/4020) courses to be content courses. This means that they now include additional cultural content, which is now the basis of the language instruction.
- We also believe that this demonstrate the effectiveness of our extra-curricular cultural activities: **66.6%** of students in this class who met or exceeded expectations were actively involved in our extra-curricular cultural activities (Italian Club and Italian Table/Conversation Hour).

Last Semester of Coursework – Final Point of the B.A. in Italian Studies

In the academic year 2019-2020, **100%** of majors graduating with an Italian Studies B.A. attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-High**. All students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-High level. Both graduating students had studied abroad in Italy. This element shows that we are effective in our students' placements. Students with previous exposure to Italian are placed according to their level, and not below or above.

- All students exceeded expectations in Intercultural Competence. We believe that this happened for two reasons:

- Our 3XXX and 4XXX language, literature and culture courses all have a high emphasis on intercultural competence instruction. In 2018-2019, we decided to restructure our 3010/3020 and 4010/4020 courses to be content courses. This means that they now include more cultural content, which is now the basis of the language instruction.
- We believe that this demonstrate the effectiveness of our extra-curricular cultural activities: both students in this graduating class were actively involved in our extra-curricular cultural activities (Italian Club and Italian Table/Conversation Hour).

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?

In late fall 2019, the Italian Studies faculty (two full time faculty and one adjunct) met to discuss assessment findings as they emerged from ITAL 2010, which Dr. Bregni taught. A.Y. 2019-2020 is the first year of our new

four-year cycle (see above). We discussed cultural content to be included in ITAL 3020 (taught by Dr. Bregni) and confirmed the process (short essay portfolio + oral interview) for seniors graduating with a B.A. in Italian Studies, and the related process (two one-hour meetings with the program coordinator, Dr. Bregni, during the last semester of coursework). In May 2020, Drs. Bregni, Karagoz and Bernhardt (adjunct) met and discussed assessment results and the overall state of the program. Dr. Bregni collected data and generated this report which is shared with program faculty. We are currently preparing syllabi and revising/updating content for ITAL 2010. During a program meeting before the beginning of the new academic year, we will discuss course assignments for spring 2021 and determine content for ITAL 3020.

B. How specifically have you decided to use 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
- Student artifacts collected
- 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 the findings.

- Feedback received from the Dean's office and the University Assessment Coordinator on the 2017-2018 report stimulated an internal discussion on intercultural competence as not a separate entity, but intrinsically connected to speaking (interpersonal communication) and writing (presentational communication). This had a substantial impact in terms of pedagogy and curriculum design. The result is that we decided to transform our ITAL 3010/3020 and 4010/4020 into Content Courses. Linguistic content is now delivered through themes (either major "umbrella themes", such as The Italian Graphic Novel; Women & Gender Studies in Italian Literature, Culture and Film; or a variety of connected themes under more general "umbrella" categories, for example: Pre-Modern Italy through Present-Day Pop Culture). Themes are strictly dependent on the instructor's background, scholarly interests and personality. This is a trend in present-day foreign language and culture acquisition that also responds to current challenges in students' enrollments. The Italian Studies program aims to seamlessly integrate language, literature & culture acquisition in all our courses. We believe that F19-S20 OA results indicate that we are proceeding in the right direction.
- We are creating a new intermediate speaking and writing, content-based course, which could potentially substitute ITAL 3010 + 3020, similarly to what happens in German. This, in part, responds to staffing challenges (Italian Studies is currently understaffed). On the other hand, this stems from our belief (supported by OA results) that the integration of culture in a hybrid/blended delivery model can improve learning and allow students to progress more rapidly through the curriculum, thus ultimately allowing them to access more literature & culture courses (or at an earlier stage in their studies than currently possible).
- In early March, due to the Covid-19 emergency and subsequent switch to online teaching, the Italian Studies faculty engaged in a conversation on pedagogy in online delivery, and its impact on data collecting and course content. We figured that responses to online survey would be low (as they were), but the COVID-19 situation does not seem to have impacted our courses and overall program (above and beyond logistics and delivery methods, that is). Students' results were just as strong as in the past. Intercultural competence, in particular, appears slightly higher than in the past. With a few exceptions (see comments, above, on academic advising), students who come into Italian Studies are highly motivated and passionate about learning the language and the culture of Italy.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

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?

Since fall 2018 (see above, Narrative), the two active-productive skills in foreign language acquisition, Speaking and Writing, are now assessed focusing on two (out of the possible five) outcomes, interpersonal communication (Oral) and presentational communication (Written), plus intercultural competence. Intercultural competence, in fact, is assessed not as a separate entity, but as specifically connected to/emerging from Interpersonal communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written), which we find more consistent with the modes of foreign language and culture acquisition. As a result, A.Y. marked the beginning of a new four-year cycle (see above, and below).

We will be fine-tuning our instructor-specific cultural content for courses in A.Y. 2020-2021, the second year of our four-year cycle.

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

Outcomes (interpersonal communication, presentational communication and intercultural competence) were assessed through **direct measures** (testing and oral interview/presentation in ITAL 2010 and 3020; oral interview and short writing portfolio in the last semester of coursework) and **indirect measures** (an exit survey).

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

1. Our increased content-based approach is proving very effective. The percentage of students meeting and exceeding benchmarks in interpersonal communication, presentational communication and intercultural competence is increasing. This confirms recent scholarly findings about the validity of the content-based approach in foreign language development.
2. Students are learning rapidly and effectively. Therefore, a content-based, hybrid 3000 new course could feasibly substitute ITAL 3010 + ITAL 3020, thus allowing our students to access literature & culture courses at an earlier stage, and possibly helping us solve some issues with staffing.

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

As stated above, A.Y. 2019-2020 marks the beginning of a new four-year cycle, as follows:

- A.Y. 2019-2020 was the first year.
- A.Y. 2020-2021 will be the mid-point.
- A.Y. 2021-2022 will be the third year.

A.Y. 2022-2023 will conclude the four-year cycle.

Data will be collected, analyzed and discussed at the end of each year. Changes, if necessary, will be implemented each year, as needed. A report will be created at the end of each academic year. A more thorough analysis will be performed at the end of spring 2021 as the midpoint in the assessment cycle. A final analysis will be performed in spring 2023 as the final point of the four-year cycle.

In more practical terms:

- in spring 2021 we will develop the new hybrid 3000 course mentioned above.
- we will continue intentionally developing cultural content for our courses and discussing both challenges and successes, as well as monitoring results.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.
Rubrics (6 total, created in A.Y. 2018-2019) will be submitted as attachments to the same email as this plan and yearly report.