

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): August 2021	Assessment Contact: Dr. Claudia Karagoz (as of January 2021)
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In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? A.Y. 2020-2021	
In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? A.Y. 2019-2020	

Narrative

The Italian Studies program is inter/multidisciplinary in nature. Its focus is the development of linguistic and cultural proficiency within a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary context. Students are strongly encouraged to select a second major. The Italian Studies program contributes to the current A&S Core (Foreign Language, Literature, and Global Citizenship, Requirements). We plan to submit a number of our courses for approval for the new University Core, as well as create new ones (e.g. an Ignite Seminar, etc.). We are also currently working on strengthening our Minor (creation of new 3xxx-level courses to attract more students). As for the Italian BA, we have asked Provost Mike Lewis that it be suspended rather than eliminated (recommendation of the APRC). This is because we are confident that once (1) students resume studying abroad in Italy and (2) the Italian program positions itself solidly in the new Core, as planned, the number of our Majors and Minors will grow considerably.

Since Fall 2016, as approved by the CAS Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and Faculty Council, the Italian Studies B.A. requires 30 credits (previously 27) and it includes ITAL 2010, Intermediate Italian – Language & Culture. ITAL 2010 is also the last course in the current A&S 3-semester LLC Core requirement. So, since Fall 2016 the Italian Studies program identifies ITAL 2010 as the starting point for our majors and minors (while bearing in mind that it also includes non-majors/minors), intentionally looking 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 in 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 revised and updated 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. Hence, as of Fall 2018, the two active-productive skills in foreign language acquisition, Speaking and Writing, are 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 current 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 when 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 marked the beginning of a new four-year cycle, as follows:

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

Process: course instructors apply the rubrics to the artifacts of student learning identified in each course and submit the data to the Program Coordinator. The Coordinator analyzes and discusses data collected with faculty at the end of each year. Changes, if necessary, are implemented each year, based on the findings resulting from analysis and discussion of the data collected. A report is created at the end of each academic year.

*Our initial plan was to perform a more thorough analysis at the end of Spring 2021, the midpoint in the original assessment cycle. Due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 related health emergency (Spring 2020-Spring 2021), we decided to perform a more thorough analysis at the end of Spring 2022. 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; 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? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

1. Interpersonal communication (Oral)

Students will be able to communicate in **spoken Italian** at least at the level of:

- a. Intermediate-High proficiency (last semester of B.A. coursework at SLU) according to the standards set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>)
- b. Intermediate- Low proficiency (ITAL 2010) according to the standards set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>)

2. Presentational communication (Written)

Students will be able to communicate in **written Italian** at least at the level of:

- a. Intermediate-High proficiency (last semester of B.A. coursework at SLU) according to the standards set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>)
- b. Intermediate-Low proficiency (ITAL 2010) according to the standards set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>)

3. Intercultural Competence

Students will be able to investigate the **culture** of Italian-speaking countries from a variety of cross-cultural perspectives [ACTFL –Intercultural competence, as it emerges from 1 and 2. See above, Narrative (Oral and Written) and 'Note' below].

Note: Since fall 2018 (see above, Narrative), the two active-productive skills in foreign language acquisition, Speaking and Writing, are 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 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: Artifacts of Student Learning

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

- SLO: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION (ORAL)

Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

- a. Direct measures: testing (*final oral interview/presentation*). (ITAL 2010; Intermediate Italian: Language and Culture, third-semester Italian language) [Indirect measures: exit surveys: due to unforeseen circumstances, in Fall 2020 the ITAL 2010 course instructor did not collect exit surveys]
- a. b. Direct measures: testing (*oral interview*). Indirect measures: exit survey. (**Last semester of B.A.** coursework at SLU; formerly ITAL 4950, for zero credits, eliminated in 2017).

- SLO: PRESENTATIONAL COMMUNICATION (WRITTEN)

Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

- a. Direct measures: testing (*final written exam*). (ITAL 2010; Intermediate Italian: Language and Culture, third-semester Italian language) [Indirect measures: exit surveys: due to unforeseen circumstances, in Fall 2020 the ITAL 2010 course instructor did not collect exit surveys]
- b. Direct measures: testing (*short writing portfolio*). Indirect measures: exit survey. (**Last semester of B.A.** coursework at SLU; formerly ITAL 4950, for zero credits, eliminated in 2017).

- SLO: INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE*

Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

- c. Direct measures: testing (*final oral interview/presentation & final written exam*). (ITAL 2010; Intermediate Italian: Language and Culture, third-semester Italian language) [Indirect measures: exit surveys: due to unforeseen circumstances, in Fall 2020 the ITAL 2010 course instructor did not collect exit surveys]
- d. Direct measures: testing (*oral interview and short writing portfolio*). Indirect measures: exit survey (**Last semester of B.A.** coursework at SLU; formerly ITAL 4950, for zero credits, eliminated in 2017)

*Intercultural competence is now assessed as connected to/emerging from Interpersonal communication (Oral) and Presentational Communication (Written), not as a separate entity, and is inserted in each corresponding rubric.

- ITAL 3020 - not taught in AY 2020-2021
- 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 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.

PROCESS

- Rubrics (see attached) were used (rubrics were updated in A.Y. 2018-2019 to reflect program assessment plan changes/modifications)
- The course instructor applied the rubrics to the artifacts of student learning identified in 2010 and submitted the data to the Program Coordinator
- The Program Coordinator applied the rubrics to the artifacts of student learning identified for the BA (last semester of B.A. coursework at SLU)
- The Program Coordinator compiled and analyzed the 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 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.

As in the past, students were regularly involved in the assessment feedback-loop by receiving on-going feedback on their progress and participating in self-assessments. For example, students 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 (not taught in AY 20-21), 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)?

ITAL 2010 – Assessed in Fall 2020 (not offered in Spring 2021) – Assessment Data

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
13	Interpersonal communication (Oral)	5 (38.4%)	6 (46.1%)	2 (15.3%)
	& Intercultural Competence	2 (15.3%)	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
13	Presentational communication (Written)	4 (30.7%)	9 (69.2%)	0 (0%)
	& Intercultural Competence	2 (15.3%)	0 (76.9%)	1 (7.6%)

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.

In Fall 2020 ITAL 2010 was taught in person. We have never before offered this class fully online or at an off-campus site, so we currently have no data to determine whether achievement differs by teaching modality or on-ground location.

Direct assessment results:

- ***In spring 2021, ITAL 2010 was not taught.***
- ***In A.Y. 2020-2021, 84.5% of our students met or exceeded criteria for Interpersonal Communication (Oral), 99.9% met or exceeded criteria for Presentational Communication (Written), and Intercultural Competence.***

Indirect assessment results:

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the course instructor did not collect exit surveys for ITAL 2010 in Fall 2020.

Conclusions:

In the academic year 2020-2021, a large majority 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.

ITAL 3020 –was not offered in AY 2020-2021)**ITAL B.A. – Last Semester of Coursework (formerly ITAL 4950 – Capstone for 0 Credits) – F20-S21 Assessment Data**

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

Total students	Outcome assessed	Exceeds expected outcome	Meets expected outcome	Does not meet expected outcome
1	Presentational communication (Written)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	&			
	Intercultural Competence	1 (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 Italian Studies B.A.: Intermediate-High on the ACTFL scale.

Direct assessment results:

- *In Fall 2020 no student graduated with an Italian Studies B.A.*
- *In Spring 2021, one student graduated with an Italian Studies B.A.*
- *In A.Y. 2020-2021 100% of our students exceeded criteria for Interpersonal Communication (Oral), Presentational Communication (Written), and Intercultural Competence.*

Indirect assessment results:

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

- **In the Academic Year 2020-2021**, in the four language production skills, the student (100% 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 student (100% of graduating students) strongly agreed that they understand and know more about the culture of the Italian speaking countries

Conclusions:

In the academic year 2020-2021, the student graduating with an Italian Studies B.A. attained the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-High**. They 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

The data shows that student learning outcomes were achieved: most students were able to communicate in spoken (SLO: Interpersonal communication - Oral) and written Italian (SLO: Presentational communication - Written) at least at the level of Intermediate-Low proficiency (<https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>). For example, most students were able to write simple compositions, summaries and reviews, and produce language in multiple strings of sentences (SLO: Presentational communication - Written)

They were also able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with uncomplicated tasks and social situations related to work, school, recreation and areas of interest (SLO: Interpersonal communication - Oral). A large percentage of students was also able to investigate the culture of Italian-speaking countries from a variety of cross-cultural perspectives (SLO: Intercultural Competence), as evidenced by their cultural presentations and oral interview.

Most students progressed nicely from first semester Italian to the Intermediate-Low level. Students with previous exposure to Italian were correctly placed according to their level, not below or above. This shows that we are effective in students' placement.

The fact that a majority of students met or exceeded expectations in Intercultural Competence demonstrates the effectiveness of our extra-curricular cultural activities and cultural course offerings insofar as these students were either actively involved in our extra-curricular cultural activities (e.g. the Italian Table/Conversation Hour), or enrolled in Italian literature/culture courses.

We believe that 15.3% (two students) did not meet expectations due to specific health and/or personal challenges they were experiencing during Spring 2021.

ITAL 3020 – Midpoint of the B.A. in Italian Studies ITAL 3020 was not taught in AY 20-21

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

In the academic year 2020-2021, the student graduating with an Italian Studies B.A. exceeded the expected ACTFL proficiency level of **Intermediate-High** (<https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intermediate%20Can-Do%20Statements.pdf>). As the data shows, the student was able to communicate in spoken (SLO: Interpersonal communication -Oral) and written Italian (SLO: Presentational communication - Written) above this level. For example, the student's writing (SLO: Presentational communication - Written) exceeded expectations in that the student was able to narrate in all major time frames and their writing was easily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to the writing of non-natives. The student's papers were also well-organized, their style clear and effective, and their ideas original and persuasive. In addition, the student drew constructive cultural comparisons between US Italian cultures and was comfortable with the complexities of the new perspectives resulting from these comparisons.

We believe that the student's above-expectations achievements are due to several factors:

-This student studied abroad in Italy in one of our carefully selected partner institutions there. This shows the effectiveness of our guidance to students who choose to study abroad

- The student exceeded expectations in Intercultural Competence because all our 3XXX and 4XXX language, literature and culture courses have a strong 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.

The student's performance also demonstrates the effectiveness of our extra-curricular cultural activities: the student in this graduating class was actively involved in or led our extra-curricular cultural activities (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 2020, the Italian Studies faculty (two full time faculty and one adjunct) met to discuss assessment findings as they emerged from ITAL 2010. We 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. Karagoz, during the last semester of coursework). In May 2021, Drs. Bregni and Karagoz met and discussed assessment results and the overall state of the program. We reflected on the features of the program that continue to foster student success (new textbooks choices and related online platforms; extra-curricular activities; study abroad; etc.), and on the causes of the difficulties 2 students experienced in ITAL 2010. A large focus of this discussion was the revamping and submission of existing language courses to the new University Core. Dr. Karagoz collected data and generated this report which is shared with program faculty. We are currently preparing syllabi and revising/updating content for ITAL 2010, which we plan to submit for the Eloquentia Perfecta 2 Requirement. During a program meeting in the Fall 2021 we will discuss course assignments for Spring 2022 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:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course content • Teaching techniques • Improvements in technology • Prerequisites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course sequence • New courses • Deletion of courses • Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings |
| <p>Changes to the Assessment Plan</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning outcomes • Student artifacts collected • Evaluation process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

- In terms of pedagogy and curriculum design, based on this year's BA program positive findings (graduating student exceeded proficiency expectations), we decided to continue our plan to deliver linguistic content through themes in our ITAL 3010/3020 and 4010/4020 courses (which we decided to transform into Content Courses last year). Themes would either be major "umbrella themes" (e.g. The Italian Graphic Novel; Women & Gender Studies in Italian Culture) or a variety of connected themes under more general "umbrella" categories, (e.g. Pre-Modern Italy through Present-Day Pop Culture). More broadly, the Italian Studies program aims to seamlessly integrate language, literature & culture acquisition in all our courses. We believe that results indicate that we are proceeding in the right direction.
- We are creating a new intermediate speaking, content-based course, which we plan to submit for the new University Core, that could potentially replace ITAL 3010 + 3020. The creation of this course would remedy, in part, staffing challenges (Italian Studies is currently severely understaffed; 1 FT faculty, Dr. Karagoz, working 75% in Italian and 25% in WGS, and Dr. Bregni, current LLC Chair, only teaching one course per semester). On the other hand, the creation of this new course 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. This ultimately allows students to access more literature & culture courses (or at an earlier stage in their studies than currently possible).

Starting early March 2020, due to the Covid-19 emergency and subsequent mid-semester switch to online teaching, the Italian Studies faculty engaged in a conversation on pedagogy in online delivery, and its impact on data collection and course content. A few challenges notwithstanding (e.g. in Fall 2020, the ITAL 2010 instructor did not collect the required exit surveys), our experience with online/hybrid courses has been positive overall. Our conversation led to the creation, in Summer 2021, of the first online Italian course (ITAL 1020). We are currently discussing creating additional online offerings.

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 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. 2019-2020 marked the beginning of a new four-year cycle (see above, and below) which will end in AY 22-23.

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

Outcomes (interpersonal communication, presentational communication and intercultural competence) have been assessed through **direct measures** (testing and oral interview/presentation in ITAL 2010; 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 continue to prove very effective. The percentage of students meeting and exceeding benchmarks in interpersonal communication, presentational communication and intercultural competence remains strong (ITAL 2010) or is increasing (BA). 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-level new course could feasibly substitute ITAL 3010 + ITAL 3020, allowing our students to access literature & culture courses at an earlier stage, and possibly helping us solve staffing some issues.

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 2022 (we were unable to perform it at the originally planned midpoint in the assessment cycle Spring 2021, due to major disruptions caused by the COVID-19 related health emergency). A final analysis will be performed in spring 2023 as the final point of the four-year cycle.

In more practical terms:

- in spring 2022 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.