



Program Assessment: *Annual Report*

Program(s): Spanish B.A.

Degree or Certificate Level: Major

Department: Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

College/School: College Arts & Sciences

Date: September 1, 2021

Primary Assessment Contact: Ana M. Montero

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected?

Academic year 2020-2021

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

Academic year 2020-2021

1. Student Learning Outcomes

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

Learning Outcomes for the Spanish B.A. Program

<https://catalog.slu.edu/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/languages-literatures-cultures/spanish-ba/#learningoutcomestext>

1. Graduates will be able to articulate complex ideas and have meaningful interactions in Spanish, both orally and in writing (measured orally; writing proficiency had been measured in the cycle period of 2017-2020)
2. Graduates will be able to engage with Spanish-speaking cultures. They will be able to explain similarities and differences between cultures (partially measured).

They were assessed according to the following ACTFL mode: Interpersonal Communication–Oral Mode for Advanced Learners

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.

Online oral interviews during final semester of Spanish studies were used as assessment method to measure SLO1 and 2. Interviews were conducted by the respective instructor in each student's last 4000-level course in the Spring of 2021 (SPAN 4000, SPAN 4150, or SPAN 4400) and by the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, or only by the UPC when the student had already completed their major in the Fall of 2020 and (s)he was not taking a class during their last senior semester. All courses were offered in-person at St Louis campus (masks and social distancing still implemented), except for SPAN 4000 which was delivered online. Each faculty member received a pool of questions and a recommended protocol for a successful interview that had been previously introduced during a Spanish Program meeting.

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.

Every interview was assessed by one or two full-time faculty members in the Spanish program following a common rubric provided by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines at the Advanced Low Level: the first faculty member conducted the interview and provided a rubric with her/his assessment of student's performance. Later the Undergraduate Program Coordinator listened a video or recording of half of the interviews and submitted a second rubric. The rubric and a table with students' scores are submitted with this report (in a different folder); names have been removed for confidentiality.

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)?

Meaning of scale

5 = exceeds expectations

4 = meets expectations (strong)

3 = meets expectations (minimal)

2 = does not meet expectations

Number of assessed interviews: 5

Summary of assessment

→ assessed students meet expectations comfortably (minimal toward strong, or beyond 3.25) in the following areas:

- a. Empathy (3.85)
- b. Text Type (3.37)
- c. Comprehensibility (3.37)
- d. Cultural Self-Awareness (3.37)
- e. Curiosity (3.37)
- f. Language Control (3.25)

→ assessed students meet expectations (minimal: beneath 3.25) in the following areas:

- a. Language Function (3.12)
- b. Communicative Strategies (2.85)

Conclusions

→ Overall, results are satisfactory since scores show that expectations are met though not strongly (3.32 is the average score). This translates into major students “being able to articulate complex ideas and have meaningful interactions in Spanish orally” (SLO 1). This score is lower than in previous years but that’s understandable since oral skills are being measured this time, whereas writing proficiency was assessed in the cycle period of 2017-2020. Briefly, oral skills emerge significantly later than writing, listening, and reading skills. Finally, student interviews also showed that SLU

majors “able to engage with Spanish-speaking cultures” and they are “able to explain similarities and differences between cultures” in a satisfactory way according to their level (SLO 2).

→ The highest category is *Empathy*. This score signals that students demonstrate the ability to recognize intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and act in a supportive manner towards another cultural group. Openness to other cultures is emphasized in every course within the Spanish program and it is a first step to achieve SLO2. Moreover, there has been an increase in the service component in courses such as SPAN 4150 within the Spanish program which reinforces the achievement of empathy. Finally, the fact that we have lived one year under pandemic conditions may also contribute to explain that we all may be more attuned to this behavior.

→ Scores for *Text type, Comprehensibility, Cultural Self-Awareness, and Curiosity* are also satisfactory. Both *Text Type* and *Comprehensibility* are particular important to achieve SLO 1. *Text Type* signals that students engage in the discourse and are able to maintain communication in an organized, substantive way. Being able to assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions in a convincing manner in a second language is a noteworthy achievement, and part of the expectations to be achieved by SLU graduates. *Comprehensibility* is also important since it signals that students are able to make themselves understood by native audiences unaccustomed to interacting with non-natives. This is a main goal in the program and translates into the ability to connect with other speakers, establish communication, and advance ideas (SLO 1).

Cultural Self-Awareness, and Curiosity build up intercultural competence, since they support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. Thus, students show interest in other cultures and ability to articulate insights into their own cultural rules and biases, even if they still demonstrate preference for those rules shared with their own cultural group.

→ Scores are lower for the following skills: *Language Function, and Communicative Strategies*. *Language Function* (or the ability to handle language tasks, which can range from narration or description to construction of hypotheses in Spanish, in an accurate manner) still scored satisfactorily, showing that students are able to communicate effectively orally. Though students are able to maintain conversation, the use of communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution needs to be restrengthened in our courses. As a hypothesis, the fact that communication has been more limited during a pandemic year, may explain a certain lack of communicative agility.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

Program assessment results are important markers to show the success of the program in leading students to achieve proficiency in Spanish at an advanced level. Specifically, findings are satisfactory since they show that expectations are met and students are able to communicate effectively in Spanish and show a noteworthy degree of intercultural competence.

A specific finding for this and last year (when more than one colleague assessed the performance of one student) is the need for calibration of the categories implemented. This should be part of the review process of the assessment method and it would increase its coherence and efficiency.

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?

Results and findings were discussed at our first program meeting in the Fall (August 26, 2021).

Recommendations for changes or adjustments are evaluated by all members of the faculty Spanish program.

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.

Two set of actions were identified.

First, the assessment process will be strengthened in the following way:

- Assessment should be conducted earlier during the Spring semester, so that a conversation on how to improve the program can be tackled at the end of the Spring semester and changes can be implemented in the Fall.
- A calibration session for the rubric will be held early next Spring so that results can be more reliable and all instructors work on the same page.
- More than one interview will be conducted by Spanish faculty mentors so that our majors are more aware of program goals and expectations; specifically questions for an entry interview in the major (in addition to an exit interview) will be prepared this semester.

Second, findings are used to identify potential areas for future curriculum improvement, and to make sure our students achieve the SLOs for the Spanish B.A.. The following recommendations were accepted:

- Inclusion of the students learning outcomes for the B.A. in most syllabi (3000-level and 4000-level courses).
- Creation of specific activities and exercises that prepare students to achieve SLOs in Spanish.
- Inclusion of another interview at the beginning of the program (as mentioned above) in order to strengthen students' level of motivation and awareness of goals.

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?

Faculty members in Spanish are regularly invited to design their courses more intentionally with the SLOs in the program in mind. As mentioned earlier and for several reasons, there has been an increase in the service component in SPAN 4150 which helps strengthen communicative abilities (SLO 1), and intercultural competence (SLO2) in a more realistic setting than a classroom.

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

The student interviews conducted this year for the first time did not only aim to measure students' oral proficiency but also students' intercultural abilities.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Findings overall (last 2 or 3 years) are satisfactory since they show the success of the Spanish program in helping students achieve an advanced proficiency in Spanish. Specific findings this year show more empathetic attitudes in students.

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

Assessment plan and its findings should be regularly discussed at a meeting every Spring. Recommendations for changes or adjustments are evaluated and decided by all members of the faculty Spanish program.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.

→ Please find the assessment rubric and the revised assessment plan in a different folder.