

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs

Unit: **French/SLCL/LAS**

Unit Head approval: Armine Kotin Mortimer

Date: 9 May 2008

SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Brief description of changes or improvements made in your unit as the result of assessment results since 2000.

A major revision of the undergraduate curricula has resulted in better responsiveness to the students' needs and previous preparation. One feature of this revision was the creation of a series of 300 level courses for majors. In 2000, we created French 208, Critical Writing and Reading, to provide a bridge from language courses to content courses; this course has given students tools for proficiency in writing, reading, and interpretation and has resulted in better outcomes in French 209 and 210 and in the 300-level courses. Two faculty created a new course with funding from the European Union Center, French 418, Language and Minorities in Europe, which addresses the changing European linguistic and political environment, enhancing the diversity of electives for majors.

Writing assignments have generally increased in 200, 300, and 400 level courses for the major (and minor), as successful writing in French has been recognized as a major outcome of instruction in our major.

A feature of the previous plan, keeping records in the form of student portfolios, could not be implemented for lack of support; however, samples of papers written for classes have been available for consultation by all instructors.

The previous plan did not address the graduate programs. Nevertheless, one result of the study in 1999 was to improve the structure of graduate advising across the different options; another result was to institute annual reporting of graduate student activities and discussion of their progress in a closed faculty meeting.

SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN

(a) **PROCESS:** *Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.*

The assessment coordinator, who is also the department head, attended all the workshops offered and learned how to develop a plan. The Head and faculty members studied the previous outcomes assessment and met in April to discuss desired outcomes, consider possible measures, and design the plan. The faculty also responded to a survey designed to insure that all parts of the department had a voice in determining desired outcomes, with a view to developing the assessment plan for undergraduates and graduates. With the help of SLCL and ATLAS staff, the results of the survey were compiled, as reflected in the outcomes listed below.

The basic goals expressed in the 1999 plan remain valid and have been revised to be more specific and precise. The planned Annual Outcomes Survey is a new measurement instrument not used in the past. It will be given toward the end of each spring term to all faculty and other instructors who have taught courses at the 200, 300, 400, and 500 levels.

(b) STUDENT OUTCOMES: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes). Note: general goals apply to all students for the degree; specific goals are in addition to the general ones.

Undergraduate Majors:

Acquire proficiency in speaking, writing, and understanding French; acquire general knowledge about French and Francophone culture; acquire general knowledge about the structure and history of the French language; develop essay-writing skills; gain competence in specific literary genres and periods; gain experience studying in a French-speaking country; draw conclusions after weighing evidence; locate and use information; understand cultural differences; learn analytical, interpretive, and problem-solving skills; work cooperatively in groups.

Program specific, in addition to the above:

Concentration in French Studies: learn methods of literary and cultural analysis.

Concentration in French Commercial Studies: acquire competence in French business language and concepts as well as translation skills.

Curriculum preparatory to the teaching of French: earn state teacher certification; learn theoretical, philosophical, and psychological bases of language acquisition and teaching.

Graduate:

MA in French: achieve high proficiency in all aspects of the French language; develop and apply critical, analytical, and interpretive skills in writing and speaking; acquire broad competence in French and Francophone literature and culture; develop high proficiency in essay-writing skills and in oral expression in French; acquire advanced knowledge about the structure, history, and acquisition of the French language; learn to conduct research; prepare for work in some academic positions; prepare for non-academic positions in several possible fields; learn professional standards and conduct.

Program specific:

French Studies: achieve broad knowledge of French and Francophone literature and culture in context across the centuries as well as some knowledge of cinema.

French Linguistics: achieve competence in linguistic analysis of the French language, specifically phonetics and phonology, morphology and syntax, discourse analysis, and history of the French language.

French Language Learning: achieve proficiency in teaching methodologies and theories of language learning; acquire experience and expertise as a French language instructor.

PhD in French: demonstrate high proficiency in all aspects of the French language; gain additional knowledge about the structure, history, and acquisition of the French language; acquire comprehensive competence in several areas of French and Francophone culture and particular expertise in one; sharpen critical, analytic, and interpretive skills; attain high proficiency in written and oral self-expression; prepare for work in academic positions; prepare for non-academic positions in a variety of fields including highly skilled writing, research, governmental or non-governmental positions, and media; learn excellent research skills; learn public speaking and lecturing skills; acquire experience and expertise as an instructor; learn professional standards and demeanor; represent the department at professional meetings.

Program specific:

French Studies: achieve expertise in French and Francophone literature and culture to the level of beginning assistant professors in academic positions; demonstrate skills in original analysis and interpretation of a well-defined literary, cultural, and theoretical corpus.

French Linguistics: demonstrate knowledge of the history, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of French language and expertise in two of these domains to the level of beginning assistant professors in academic positions.

French SLATE: achieve expertise in theories and methodology of language learning and/or teacher education to the level of beginning assistant professors in academic positions; acquire experience in supervising teachers, assessing students, and developing programs.

(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:

1. Annual Outcomes Survey to assess various measures, including the faculty's success in meeting goals for all courses they taught each year.
2. Standing committee on Outcomes to assess measures and report to the faculty.
3. Portfolios of undergraduate majors' work.
4. Assessment of final exams and GPAs of undergraduate majors: study of trends; choice of award and scholarship winners.
5. Evaluation of cloze tests given to majors at start of 200-level courses and in the last semester before graduation.
6. Senior Survey results.
7. Results of comprehensive MA final exam, written and oral.
8. Results of preliminary PhD exams.
9. Graduation rate of MA and PhD students, from Graduate College data.
10. Job placement for MA and PhD students.

SECTION 3: PLANS FOR USING RESULTS

(a) PLANS: *Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.*

The faculty will meet following the report of the Outcomes committee and the Annual Outcomes Survey to discuss results and to adjust curricula. We will revise the curricula as needed to improve the success rate at meeting the goals. If the committee identifies weaknesses in a particular area, a new or revised course will address the situation.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Spring 2009: the Outcomes committee will meet to evaluate a selection of undergraduate portfolios, final exams, and GPAs. The Annual Survey will be administered for the first time; results will be discussed at a faculty meeting in April, with the Senior Survey included in the discussions as available. Repeated every spring.

Fall 2009: A cloze test being devised by a faculty member and a graduate student will be tested on 200-level students, then given to those same students as they reach their final semester. Repeated every year.

Ongoing. The Annual Survey will provide information for discussion among the faculty and contribute to plans for revision of courses and curricula.