

MSU Departmental Assessment Plan 2007-2009

Department: **Modern Languages and Literatures**

Department Head: **Doctor Bridget Kevane**

Assessment Coordinator: **Doctor John Patrick Thompson**

Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department:

Japanese, French, German, and Spanish

June 13, 2007

As the coordinator of the Assessment Policy, I have discussed this policy with my colleagues of Modern Languages and Literatures, and we have decided that the policy is still effective and does not require any changes.

Sincerely,
John Thompson

Assessment Policy: Introduction

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

The Department offers a range of majors and minors (Spanish, French, German majors; Japan Studies minor) within certain national literatures and cultures and in interdisciplinary programs. In accordance with the goals of international professional organizations, MLL structures its programs to reflect the five skills involved in foreign language pedagogy: speaking, listening comprehension, reading, writing, and cultural content. The foreign language classroom, especially at the introductory and intermediate levels, differs significantly from a large lecture or a small seminar discussion. Students work in groups, sing songs, play games, or recite tongue twisters in the target language. Pedagogical practice in these courses involves a range of learning experiences and encourages talking in class. Student participation is key, class sizes tend to be relatively small (though Spanish classes tend to be larger, at the upper level as well), and students work closely with professors at all levels. Through the implementation of the latest technology, current innovations, and experienced instruction, MLL professors and adjuncts bring other cultures to the MSU campus. Courses increase in difficulty through the 300-level, commensurate to the developing skills of the students. Learning is cumulative. Minors are expected to attain a general level of knowledge in their respective fields. For majors, the capstone seminar in each discipline provides an opportunity for a student to specialize in one area and for the faculty to assess a student's linguistic development before graduation.

The Department is committed to the idea that the best way to learn about another culture is to learn the language. Cultural content is an integral aspect of the learning process. The programs are informed by this conviction. Students progress in sequence from the introductory to advanced courses, often with the added and imperative experience of

spending an academic year abroad, living the target language. Because our programs are small (3 French professors; 3 Spanish; 2 German; 1 Japanese; distance-learning Arabic), professors often share many of the same students. We share advising and ask students to evaluate advising in order to get feedback on programs. Our assessment policy reflects the sequential nature of our courses and our close contact to students throughout their undergraduate careers. A casual conversation in the corridor can be an informal gauge of a student's progress. The capstone seminar, however, gives each student the opportunity to develop an area of expertise in the respective majors to escort them into the world beyond MSU.

Assessment Policy

Department of Modern Languages

Degree Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

French, German, and Spanish Majors:

- 1) Majors are expected to attain reasonable levels of proficiency in each of the five following areas: speaking, reading, writing, listening comprehension, and culture.
- 2) Students should be able to communicate effectively in the target language, expressing a wide variety of topics, from personal information to more abstract kinds of knowledge or opinion (as in one's views about democracy).
- 3) The student should write with moderate fluency, and understand a range of spoken French, German, or Spanish from news broadcasts to academic lectures in her/his field.
- 4) In addition to a solid ability to communicate proficiently in the language, majors should have a good overview of the history, literature, culture, and politics of the country or countries in question.
- 5) Majors should acquire not only an overview of historical and cultural trends, but also gain a reasonable level of expertise in one area related to his/her interests.
- 6) In optimal cases, the student majoring in French, German, or Spanish should study abroad for a year in a country where the language is spoken.

Teaching Option: Major:

Students who pursue the teaching option in the major languages are required to pass a five-skills proficiency test before they begin student teaching.

Assessment Activities:

Courses within the Department are generally sequential; the acquisition of foreign language skills is cumulative. In most cases, a major's completion of the program requirements, and successful participation in the capstone seminar, will serve as an indicator of reasonable proficiency in all areas outlined above.

Degree Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

French, German, and Spanish Minors:

- 1) Students who minor in French, German, or Spanish are expected to attain reasonable levels of proficiency in each of the three following areas: speaking, reading, writing, and listening comprehension.
- 2) Minors should have an overview of historical and cultural developments in countries where the target language is spoken.
- 3) Ideally minors would spend some time in a country where the target language is spoken.

French, German, and Spanish Minors:

In most cases, successful completion of the requirements outlined by the French, German, and Spanish curricula will indicate that the student has achieved a reasonable level of proficiency appropriate to the program goals of the minor.

Teaching Minor:

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of the respective program, teaching minors are expected to pass a five-skills proficiency text before beginning any student teaching.

Program Evaluations for All Students:

All students will complete a survey to be drafted and collected by the Assessment Committee. This survey will provide data about the degree to which MLL curricula enable students to attain discipline-specific knowledge in each of the major and minor fields.

The Assessment Committee will collect and compile data from each of the major and minor fields, meet with the faculty every two years to evaluate the survey and its results, and make recommendations for improvement based on the results.

Student Outcomes Assessment for:

Japanese language—Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

Assessment Activities

Two semesters of Japanese language study, MLJ 101 and 102, are required to fulfill the interdisciplinary Japan Studies minor. At the end of the two semesters, students are expected to possess the following levels of cultural and linguistic competence in each skill area:

Listening and Speaking Skills: students should know how to express themselves in real-life situations such as exchanging greetings, introducing themselves, talking about their background, hobbies, schedules, preferences, and

opinions using simple sentences; and know basic vocabulary, the basic word order in Japanese sentences, levels of politeness, use of particles, verb and adjective rules of conjugation, negative forms, and connective forms. Instructors evaluate listening and speaking skills by monitoring classroom performance, and assigning listening exercises and a final oral presentation.

Reading and Writing Skills: students should be able to write simple, descriptive text and personal letters using the two phonetic syllabaries—hiragana and katakana—and approximately 150 kanji (ideographic characters). They should be able to read authentic texts containing basic information, such as short prose passages, schedules, personal messages, and advertisements. Instructors evaluate reading and writing skills with regular written assignments, including textbook exercises, regular examinations, and essay assignments.

Japan Studies Minor—Depts. of Modern Languages and History and Philosophy

Assessment Activities

Knowledge and understanding of Japanese Culture: students take up to 12 credits of history, literature and civilization courses for the minor. In these courses, instructors evaluate student performance in written assignments, class participation, and oral presentations. In addition, students write an in-depth, 3-credit capstone research paper about a subject in Japanese history, literature, or culture that is evaluated by the capstone advisor to judge the student's skills in original research and critical analysis.