Department/Program  World Languages/French M.A.  Date of Report:  9/20/2013

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Please refer to expanded instructions for each item. The narrative portion of the report should not exceed four pages. Appendices should be included as part of the report.

1. Overview and Context:

2. Use of Prior Assessment/Closing the Loop:

3. Assessment Data:

4. Alignment of Course and Program Learning Outcomes:

5. Recommendations for Student Learning:

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1. Overview and Context:

In accordance with our current course/PLO matrix, the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) in conjunction with the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) were assessed in 2012-2013 in the following courses.

In French 250 (Fall 2012):

SLO 2: Develop theses of a scholarly nature on special topics.

In French 260 (Fall 2012):

SLO 1c: Literary and critical theory.

In French 240 (Spring 2013):

SLO 4: Use research tools for academic papers and process data in compliance with academic standards.

At its Spring 2011 assessment meeting, the French faculty proposed two major changes aimed at making the students more aware of the competencies they are expected to demonstrate at various junctures of their coursework and with regard to the French MA PLOs. The changes were:

- to reword the SLOs descriptors as outcomes, emphasizing what the students will be able to accomplish and how they will meet the learning objectives;

- the adoption in all courses of a grading rubric according to the following four criteria – 25% each for 1. content, 2. organization, 3. academic standards, 4. grammar & spelling.

Data were collected during the AY 2012-2013 in three graduate seminars: French 250 and French 260 in Fall 2012 and French 240 in Spring 2013.

Rewording: The rewording of the PLOs/SLOs stresses the need for the students to demonstrate they have acquired the competencies.

Grading rubric: Implemented as of Fall 2011 as a means of ensuring a more standardized level of proficiency, more clearly defined expectations with regard to the overall program and specific course learning objectives and greater fairness in grading, the adoption in all MA courses of a common grading rubric has been an effective, ongoing means of assessing student proficiency in meeting the French MA PLOs and creating greater cohesion and accountability across the French MA curricula. In addition, more clearly defined criteria and guidelines for written assignments and oral presentations have been implemented and appear in all graduate green sheets and in
Desire2Learn/Canvas (see also newly revised SLOs on Department and UGS website). For example, new assessment tools in French 240 and French 260 in the form of targeted exercises leading up to the end-of-semester research paper were specifically designed and implemented to evaluate the students’ ability to incorporate literary and critical theory in their writing assignments as well as utilize research tools and draft assignments in compliance with academic standards.

2. Use of Prior Assessment/Closing the Loop:

There has been an identifiable and highlighted need across the M.A. curricula based on prior assessment data from previous semesters to focus on analytical skill development so that students are more readily able, for example, to develop, as much as possible, on their own a thesis of a scholarly nature. With that goal in mind, students need to be given more opportunities to develop further their analytical skills to the level expected in graduate studies. This shortcoming or weakness has been most evident in the quality and breadth of end-of-semester research papers. Likewise, the students’ ability to process data relating to literary and critical theory by incorporating that research into their writing assignments, while at the same time ensuring that they are complying with academic standards, has been an on-going challenge. In addition to offering a greater frequency of exercises and activities focusing on these skills, the French faculty began implementing the use of an Assessment of Learning Outcomes chart (see appendix) as a way for students to rate themselves on a scale from 0 to 5 in regard to each program learning objective, such as “Thesis development,” “Literary and critical theory,” “Research tools and processing of data in compliance with academic standards.” Inversely, the French faculty began rating at the same time each student’s ability in meeting the PLOs/SLOs in each individual course as part of a larger summative assessment of the French MA Program (see appendix).

3. Assessment Data:

As a result of the adoption in all MA courses of a common grading rubric based on the criteria of content, organization, academic standards, and grammar and spelling, the need for more emphasis on thesis development of a scholarly nature, on literary and critical theory, and on research tools and processing of data in compliance with academic standards has been highlighted.

French 250 (Fall 2012) was a graduate seminar on French novels with a new content. Paris, “the city of light,” was always a cultural and artistic hub for writers and artists throughout the ages. Through the personal perceptions of French and foreign novelists and artists, we could build a literary and artistic biography of this unique city.

The subject of this graduate seminar was very appropriate for SLO 2: to develop theses of a scholarly nature on special topics. Using the grading rubric developed by our program for both research papers and oral presentations with more clearly defined criteria and guidelines was very useful for our two main scholarly assignments for the
semester: an oral presentation on a special topic on Paris and a detailed final research paper. In addition, students had to submit a comprehensive portfolio of all their written and oral activities for the semester on the last day of class. Students were required to use the latest MLA guide for all of their research assignments, select a different scholarly topic for both their oral presentation and their research term paper very early in the semester with a well-defined abstract, a table of contents and a solid bibliography. Both scholarly major assignments were respectively 20% and 25% of their final grade. A couple of new students in the program had to resubmit their proposals and work on a more comprehensive bibliography, a better defined abstract and table of contents and a better-organized, well-defined oral presentation. Some grades in the beginning of the semester were below the results expected from graduate students (below a B). With a lot of individual support and extra work, grades gradually improved at the end of the term. For the research paper 2 students ended up with a B, two with an A- and 4 with an A.

In French 260, literary and critical theory (SLO 1c) was heavily emphasized and assessed in various ways. Students were assigned readings on 19th century French theater literary and critical theory from various sources, such as Affron’s A Stage for Poets, Giraud’s The Unheroic Hero, Hugo’s La préface de Cromwell, Lioure’s Le drame, Robichez’ Le symbolisme au theater, and Stendhal’s Racine et Shakespeare.

These reading assignments were followed up with the following assessment tools:

Weekly discussions and quizzes on these readings revealed the following findings:

Based on results of 10 students, scores fluctuated between a B- and an A with a slight uptick in the results near the end of the semester. Grades in this category were the following: 2 students received an A; 3 students received an A- and 4 students received a B+; 1 student received a B.

The midterm exam tested their knowledge of French theater literary and critical theory.

No student received an A; 6 students received an A-; 4 students received a B+.

The final exam also tested their knowledge of French theater literary and critical theory.

1 student received an A; 6 students received an A-; 2 received a B+; 1 student received a B.

Student presentations and the end-of-semester research paper were evaluated partly based on the students’ ability to incorporate or integrate relevant French theater literary and critical theory.

3 students received an A; 4 students received an A-; 3 students received a B+. 
Assessment data for the activities outlined above highlight the need for more critical thinking exercises of an analytical nature with regard to literary and critical theory. Students still have difficulty grasping key concepts or elements of critical theory and seeing their relevance to literary studies and research.

In French 240, prior and leading up to the end-of-semester research paper, students were assigned a series of MLA style guide exercises to assess their use of research tools for academic papers and ability to process data in compliance with academic standards.

The assessment data for the MLA style guide exercises were the following:

1 student received an A; 2 received an A-; 3 students received a B+.

The summative assessment data to evaluate the students’ ability to use research tools for academic papers and to process data was based on the end-of-semester research paper and revealed the following:

2 students received an A; 3 students an A-; 1 student a B.

Students did not always fully incorporate or integrate the literary research into their papers. The students’ research papers were more often like a plot summary of events taken from the literary works and films they studied instead of an in-depth analysis of the literary or cinematographic techniques being used.

The assessment data also points to the need at the program level for students to further develop their information literacy and to learn how to properly document sources using an appropriate style guide, such as MLA. These types of exercises would also have the added benefit of stressing greater attention to details and developing better proofreading skills. Students also need to become more proficient and savvy at using internet and non-internet sources for the purpose of scholarly research. This new focus is clearly articulated in the grading rubric for research-based writing assignments and will also be closely monitored by the French faculty for its overall effectiveness and impact on the program learning objectives in the short term from now until Spring 2014 and adjusted, if necessary, in the longer term up until Spring 2015.

4. **Alignment of Course and Program Learning Outcomes:**
   See current course/PLO matrix in appendix

5. **Recommendations for Student Learning:**

   Further attention will be given to improving the students’ performance in the weaknesses identified above and to developing more precise instruments and
measures to evaluate the success of our students in meeting PLOs and SLOs at the course and program level. In addition, as a means of giving students more hands on experience using the library’s resources so that they are more proficient at using technology for scholarly research and presentations, students will be assigned as an exercise only the reference to scholarly materials and will be asked to locate them for themselves at the library or on online databases. The individualized, one-on-one help session with the librarian which some students but not all take advantage of will be mandatory and will serve as a follow-up to the beginning of semester general introduction to the library’s resources session with the librarian.

6. Plans 2013-14 Academic Year:

In accordance with the course/PLO matrix, the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) in conjunction with the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) will be assessed in 2013-2014 in the following courses.

In French 220 (Fall 2013):

SLO 1b: Analyze cultural productions from a linguistic and stylistic perspective

1. As stated above, the most urgent need is to help the students be given more opportunities to develop further their analytical skills to the level expected in graduate studies.

2. Students also need to better or more clearly articulate or demonstrate the interrelatedness of knowledge between French MA courses, such as in culture and literature, by building on the body of knowledge which they have acquired in previous French BA and MA courses and other university courses for that matter and by making the appropriate connections and drawing the necessary conclusions.

3. In order to continue to make the students more aware of the outcomes they should be able to demonstrate at the end of their studies, we will continue to distribute the Assessment of Learning Outcomes chart that we developed, and we will ask all students to rate themselves on a scale from 0 to 5 in regard to each program learning objective. The faculty will also rate each student's ability based on the demonstration the students will make in their individual courses and summative assessment:

4. All graduate course syllabi must state the projected outcomes or competencies and how the students will have to demonstrate that they have reached the objectives.
5. Comprehensive exams are in the process of being redesigned in order to include more demonstration of abilities acquired during coursework.