

Department of Modern Languages
Assessment Update
December 1, 2010

I. Introduction.

The Department of Modern Languages is currently in a state of transition. Its long-term chair stepped down at the end of AY 2009-2010, and an interim chair was appointed for AY 2010-2011. Additionally, Modern Languages underwent its five-year review during AY 2009-2010, and there was no assessment update for that year. In preparation for this year's update I have examined assessment updates from 2008 and 2005. The report from 2008 is seventy-eight pages long, and while this length is due in part to a department that consists of four major languages, French, German, Japanese and Spanish, it is a difficult read at best, especially when compared to History (fourteen pages), English (thirty-four pages) and the five-year review for Criminal Justice (one hundred and two pages). The report from 2005 is much more manageable, and will serve in part as a model for this report, although my plan is to simplify it even further.

My issues with previous reports are as follows:

1. Previous reports rely on standards established by NCATE and ACFTL, both of which are organizations that assess K-12 programs or teacher preparation for K-12 programs; and while a case can be and has been made for applying these standards to university programs, such application is not appropriate simply because many areas recommended by these programs are not regularly taught in all university language classes, nor should they be. Conversely, university language classes teach areas, especially upper-level literature and culture, which are not taught in K-12 programs. While it might seem desirable to have standards established by outside agencies, it is better to have assessment standards that are directed more toward university teaching.
2. Previous reports do not assess all levels of language-learning. If I consider what aspects of language learning at Marshall University need to be assessed, at its simplest I conclude that we need to assess how well students are doing in their completion of the language requirement (101, 102, 203, 204), and, for those who go on, how well they are doing in the completion of their major. For our four languages, students are assessed at the end of 204, but not necessarily at the end of the major. Some languages have an assessment at the 300-level, but we do not have a consistent assessment instrument at the 400-level, either tests of language skills, or an assessment of the students' capstone experience.

Following the suggestion made by the University Assessment Committee, my plan this year is to look at one aspect of assessment as regularly done by the Department of Modern Languages, program goal #1 (see below), and to assess it on the 204 level using data from last year. Furthermore, I will be working with department faculty to develop a

more streamlined method of assessment and more university-specific assessment measures.

II. Program Mission:

The study of foreign languages emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills—increased powers of observation, analysis, logical reasoning, memory, and adaptability—that are immediately transferable to other areas of higher education and to a diversity of careers. In learning to understand, speak, read, and write a foreign language a student acquires direct access to another view of the world at a time when intercultural understanding, both at the national and international levels, has become an urgent priority.

III. Program's Student Learning Outcomes:

The goals of the Department of Modern Languages are adapted from the American Council of Foreign Language Teaching with modifications that make them more appropriate to university language instruction. In the program goals below, we have outlined where (in general) such language learning should occur.

1. Communicate in a language other than English (listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension and writing). Communication refers not only to the ability to express ideas orally or in writing but also to the capacity to understand meaning while reading or listening to a foreign language. Additionally, communication can and should occur at a more sophisticated level of intellectual abstraction, i.e. the ability to exchange ideas about world issues, philosophical problems and the like. This goal begins in elementary and intermediate language and continues throughout our upper-level classes.
2. Gain knowledge of another culture through the study of history and civilization, as well as literature. While we teach some culture on the 100- and 200-levels, we have 300-level courses specifically designed to teach culture, and 400-level courses specifically designed to teach literature.
3. Connect with other disciplines and acquire new information. Language-learning not only increases global understanding, but also improves students' skills in other disciplines, e.g. math and English, by improving students' analytical and interpretive abilities.
4. Develop insight and learn the nature of linguistic and cultural structures and their impact on thought and critical thinking, as well as gaining a sense of how words help shape our cultural and economic reality. The goal is relevant to all levels of language learning.
5. Participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world. This goal is specific to study abroad, which we encourage for all of our students.
6. Acquire and develop teaching techniques and technological skills in computer-assisted instruction for education majors specializing in a foreign language. This goal is specific to education majors.

IV. Assessment Activities:

We are limiting this year's assessment update to the first program goal, which we are breaking out into its four components, listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension and writing; and we are examining these components on the 204 level only. We are limiting our assessment to the 204 level because we do not have a consistent plan for obtaining data on the 300- and 400-levels. This lack will be addressed in our analysis and actions taken sections below.

Outcome	Assessment Measures (used for all four categories)	Benchmark (used for all four categories).	Results/Analysis	Analysis/Planned action
Communicate in a language other than English: listening comprehension	Completion of 204 in one of the languages. some languages base assessment on the final in 204; others administer an exit exam in the language that assesses the four areas under review.	Because we are dealing with an average student population, our benchmark is the average on a bell curve, i.e., the average for students should be a <u>C</u> .	FRN: 82% JPN: 52.86% SPN: 52% GER: 82%	Please see 'conclusions' below.
grammar			FRN: 69.8% JPN: 67.66 SPN: 57% GER: 78%	
reading comprehension			FRN 73% JPN: 41.86% SPN: 65% GER: 78%	
Writing/speaking			FRN: 66.5 (writing) JPN: 83.8 (speaking) SPN: 59% (writing) GER: 82%	

V. Overview of changes implemented in your program this past year based on results and planned action specified in last year's report:

I do not have information to this.

VI. Specify and changes/modifications made to your program based specifically on data obtained during Assessment Day Activities.

VII. Assistance needed with Assessment.

With assessment? None. The department is need of more full time temporary and permanent faculty, but that's for another report.

Conclusions:

As I go through previous reports, I find that strong steps have been taken toward regularizing assessment in the Department of Modern Languages, but there are gaps in data collection, especially on the 400-level. It is my intention in AY 2010-2011 to attempt to close these gaps by developing reasonably uniform assessment measures for all four languages, and by asking for data in the semester in which it is measured. In particular we need assessment measures for those students who are completing a major. We also need to look at our results from AY 2009-2010 and previous years, and we need to examine whether we are actually implementing our conclusions/actions? Ideally, we will have a process in place for the next chair of MDL.