

MODERN AND CLASSICAL LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
Arts and Humanities

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN (SOAP)

I. Mission Statement

The mission of the Master's Degree Program in Spanish is to prepare students at the graduate level to participate at a superior level in oral and written communication in Spanish, conduct research, apply critical methods to literary analysis of literature in Spanish, have a deep understanding of and appreciation for literature in Spanish, be well versed in the knowledge and application of literary theory, and have a familiarity with instructional methodology in Spanish language and/or literature in Spanish.

II. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

- A. Students will demonstrate oral, reading, and writing proficiency of the Spanish language at the superior level on the ACTFL scale, including knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

NOTE: "Superior" is equivalent to level four on the scale developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The scale consists of five levels: novice, intermediate, advanced, superior and native. For the purposes of the portion of this document concerning graduate program assessment, lengthy ACTFL descriptions of advanced level skills have been abbreviated, summarized, or paraphrased. It should be noted that the ACTFL description of the superior standard has in some areas been strengthened to accurately describe the department's objectives in speaking and writing.

Upon completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Communicate appropriately and express ideas, both academic and everyday, coherently and critically in oral Spanish.
2. Narrate, describe, analyze, and argue with essay-length connected discourse.
3. Demonstrate accurate reading comprehension of material of a cultural, literary, and/or theoretical nature.

- B. All students graduating with an MA in Spanish are expected to have the ability to employ appropriate research methods to conduct literary or linguistic research, apply critical methods and literary or linguistic analysis techniques to works of literature or linguistic data, as well as use MLA citation style appropriately in scholarly essays.

Upon completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate effective research competency through use of library databases to identify, evaluate, and organize relevant sources as supporting material when writing scholarly essays on topics in literature or linguistics.
2. Apply critical studies to literary and/or linguistic topics in a coherent and appropriate manner.
3. Analyze works of literature or linguistic data to produce coherent and original scholarly essays.
4. Use MLA format and citation style appropriately to cite all sources in scholarly essays.

- C. All students graduating with an MA in Spanish are expected to have an appreciation for and knowledge of one of the following two content areas at the graduate level: 1) Spanish and Spanish-American literature,

including Golden Age literature; or 2) Spanish Linguistics at the graduate level, including knowledge of Second Language Acquisition theory.

Upon completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Literature track: Explain advanced aspects of Spanish and Spanish-American literature, including Golden Age literature.
 2. Linguistics track: Explain advanced structures of all components of Spanish grammar, including syntax, morphology, phonology and phonetics, as well as demonstrate knowledge of Second Language Acquisition theory and pedagogy relating to the teaching of Spanish
- D. All students graduating with an MA in Spanish are expected to have knowledge of literary theory, and instructional methodology in Spanish language and/or literature in Spanish.

Upon completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Explain and apply advanced concepts in literary theory.
2. Demonstrate grounding in instructional methodology in Spanish language and/or literature in Spanish through class presentations on topics in literature and/or linguistics.

III. Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)

Learning Outcomes Matrix for the Spanish MA Core Courses

I = introduced R = review M = Master

	Outcome A.1.	Outcome A.2.	Outcome A.3.	Outcome B.1.	Outcome B.2.	Outcome B.3.	Outcome B.4.	Outcome C.1.	Outcome C.2.	Outcome D.1.	Outcome D.2.
SPAN 201	R	R			I	I	R		I		I
SPAN 202	R	R	I	I	I		R			I	I
SPAN 203	R	M	R	R	R	I	R			R	R
SPAN 249	R	M	M	M	R	M	R	M		R	R

SPAN 201 Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language

SPAN 202 Introduction to Literary Theory

SPAN 203 Applied Literary Theory

SPAN 249 Golden Age Literature

IV. Assessment Methods

A. Direct Measures

1. The Spanish Language Exam is a three-hour diagnostic exam that is given to all Spanish MA students in their first year, as a condition for passage to Classified Graduate Standing. The exam, offered once each semester, assesses fundamental grammar areas that students are expected to understand upon graduating with the BA in Spanish and/or upon entering the MA program in Spanish. The areas the exam assesses are taught in several of our undergraduate Spanish courses. Topics covered on the exam include the following, relevant to Outcomes A.1, A.2, A.3, and B.4:
 - Verb conjugation in all tenses and moods. Students need to know the names of verb tenses and how to conjugate regular and irregular verbs in all tenses.
 - The uses of the pronoun *se*
 - Correct spelling and rules of accent mark usage
 - Subject and object pronouns
 - The correct use of relative pronouns in relative clauses
 - Formal and informal commands
 - Morphology reflecting agreement between words
 - Essays of different styles
 - Comprehension of reading texts
 - MLA style

Students are allowed to take the exam twice; if a student does not pass the exam the second time, s/he may petition for a third, **final** opportunity to take the exam. If a student does not pass the exam for a total of three times, the student will be disqualified from the Spanish MA program.

2. The Qualifying Exam is required of all Spanish MA students for Advancement to Candidacy, and is taken after they have completed their first 12–18 units (out of a 30 unit program). It is a three-hour essay exam that requires literature students to demonstrate their general knowledge of Spanish and Spanish-American literature, including Golden Age literature (Outcomes A.2 and C.1); linguistics-track students demonstrate their knowledge of advanced structures of components of Spanish grammar, such as syntax, morphology, phonology and phonetics, as well as of knowledge of Second Language Acquisition theory and pedagogy relating to the teaching of Spanish (Outcomes A.2 and C.2). The questions are chosen at random on exam day, from a pre-published list of possible questions that cover the curriculum. As with the language exam, students are allowed two opportunities to take the exam; if a student does not pass the exam the second time, s/he may petition for a third, **final** opportunity to take the exam. Any student who does not pass the exam for a total of three times will be disqualified from the Spanish MA program.
3. The Comprehensive Exam is a culminating experience option for the Spanish MA. As such, it is taken at the very end of the program. It consists of an exam in two parts, taken one week apart: on day one, students have three hours to answer three extensive analytical essay questions, requiring both breadth and depth of knowledge; students are then given a research essay question, which they have one week to research before returning to the second exam session, during which time they develop their research essay using only note cards with relevant references. In order to pass the Comprehensive Exam, a student must demonstrate mastery of: the content area, appropriate research methods, applied criticism and analysis, literary theory, reading and written language proficiency (Outcomes A.2, A.3, B.1, B.2, B.3, B.4, either C.1 or C.2, and D.1).
4. The Thesis is a culminating experience option for those Spanish MA students who intend to enter a doctoral program. The thesis must contain an original idea that the student will develop and support. In order to be approved by the thesis committee, it must constitute an original, significant contribution to the field. A completed, approved thesis demonstrates mastery of: the content area, appropriate research methods, applied criticism and analysis, literary theory, MLA citation style, and written language proficiency (Outcomes A.2, A.3, B.1, B.2, B.3, B.4, either C.1 or C.2, and D.1).
5. In order to assess how well Spanish MA students narrate, describe, analyze, and argue with essay-length connected discourse (Outcomes A.2, B.1, B.2, B.3, and B.4) a rubric for essays will be used in SPAN 201,

202, 203, and 249 to assess such progress. Results will be reported to the faculty along with suggestions for improvement in the curriculum.

6. In order to assess how well Spanish MA students demonstrate grounding in instructional methodology in Spanish language and/or literature in Spanish, and develop oral skills to communicate appropriately and express their ideas coherently and critically after reading material of a cultural, literary, and/or theoretical nature (Outcomes A.1, A.3, D.2), a rubric for presentations will be used in SPAN 201, 202, 203, and 249 to assess such progress. Results will be reported to the faculty along with suggestions for improvement in the curriculum.

B. Indirect Measures

1. The graduate MA program in Spanish will conduct a **survey** of its alumni concerning the MA curriculum. Their input will be reported to faculty for discussion and any needed action.

V. Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

	Outcome A.1.	Outcome A.2.	Outcome A.3.	Outcome B.1.	Outcome B.2.	Outcome B.3.	Outcome B.4.	Outcome *C.1.	Outcome *C.2.	Outcome D.1.	Outcome D.2.
Diagnostic test (Language Exam)	X	X	X				X				
Qualifying Exam	X							X	X		
Comprehensive Exam		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Thesis		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Rubric for essays		X	X	X	X	X	X				
Rubric for oral presentations	X		X								X
Alumni Survey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

"X" indicates the learning outcomes the assessment activity will measure.
 * C.1 and C.2 represent the two content tracks for the MA from which students must choose; accordingly, exams measure **either** C.1 **or** C.2.

VI. Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

Year 2014 to 2015

- Method 1. Outcomes A1 and D2 in SPAN 201
- Method 2. Analyze results of Comprehensive Exam OR Thesis

Year 2015 to 2016

- Method 1. Employ Rubric for Essays in SPAN 201, 202, 203, and 249
- Method 2. Analyze results of Language Exam

Year 2016 to 2017

- Method 1. Employ Rubric for Presentations in SPAN 201, 202, 203, and 249
- Method 2. Survey of Alumni

VII. Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting

A Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP) for the MA in Spanish was developed by the former Chair of the MCLL department and was implemented from Fall 2005 until Fall 2010. A revised and updated SOAP was developed in 2011–2012 by the MA assessment coordinator with the collaboration of the Spanish graduate faculty, and updated in 2014 in consultation with the faculty. The assessment activities included in the schedule for the previous SOAP and the new one consider, among other things, assessing written and spoken language proficiency, literary competency, applied literary theory competency, and instructional methods, as evidenced by student writing assignments, oral presentations, and graduate program exams. In addition, the Spanish graduate faculty hold an annual retreat to evaluate the effectiveness of the graduate curriculum and collaborate to close the loop through curricular and procedural adjustments, as needed. What follows is a brief description of the activities carried out from 2005 until 2014:

2005–2006: Scheduled and assessed: Spoken language proficiency (Outcome A.1) and Instructional methodology (D1) in SPAN 201. Instructional methods for Spanish language were assessed as part of the students' teaching demonstrations. Spoken language proficiency was assessed when students presented oral reports on scholarly articles related to pedagogy. Specific language proficiency items assessed were fluidity, grammar, communication, pronunciation, and register. **Conclusions:** SPAN 201 adequately meets the objective for instructional methods. With regard to spoken language proficiency, it was noted that the majority of the students were native or heritage speakers of Spanish. **Curriculum adjustment:** Spanish section discussed the need to revamp the Spanish Language Exam (the diagnostic exam which students must pass as a condition for Classified standing in the Spanish MA) for relevance and to identify areas to target. **Additional adjustments, based on prior years' OA and program review:** Significantly revised MA Reading List (included in the Spanish MA Student Handbook) and Qualifying Exam questions. Updated and expanded the reading list to 1) better link it to the Spanish MA curriculum, 2) better reflect current standards for MA programs nationwide, 3) better prepare students for the Spanish Qualifying Exam by offering a clear list of canonical literature, broken down by region (Peninsular Spain and Spanish America), time period (Medieval, Colonial, 20th Century, etc.), and genre (poetry, drama, narrative).

2006–2007: Scheduled and assessed: Outcomes A.2 (written language proficiency) and B.1–3 (literary analysis and research methods) evaluated by sampling term papers collected in graduate literature classes. **Conclusions:** Although many papers are outstanding, additional training in MLA style and research methods would be beneficial. **Curriculum adjustment:** Developed a writing workshop to instruct Spanish MA students on to choose a topic, do research on library search engines, and write more

effectively, to be implemented in Fall 2007.

2007–2008: Scheduled and assessed: Outcome C.1 (knowledge of advanced fiction and poetry, and Golden Age literature) evaluated by assessing results of Qualifying Exam. **Additional assessment:** Effectiveness of writing workshop. **Conclusions:** Writing workshop was helpful to those students who attended. Qualifying exam reformat appears to be meeting objectives; however, some students are inserting irrelevant or incomplete information in their essays. **Curriculum adjustment:** Writing workshop will be offered annually. Added prompts to clarify the minimum requirements for each essay question on the Qualifying exam.

2008–2009: Scheduled: Outcomes A.1 and D.1 to be evaluated with oral presentations done in graduate literature classes. Not performed. **Conclusions:** Need to discuss logistics of scheduled OA with Spanish faculty to ensure scheduled items are relevant and feasible. **Curriculum adjustment:** n/a

2009–2010: Scheduled and assessed: Outcomes A.2 and B.2 assessed with term papers collected in SPAN 202. **Conclusions:** The students were not fully successful in the assimilation of the theory and concepts, as a more introductory course would better suit the students' needs, if followed by a course that concentrated on a more advanced application of the theory. **Curriculum adjustments based on ongoing evaluation of the field and the program in relation to it:** Spanish 218T (Applied Literary Theory, which was approved as Spanish 203 in Fall 2011) was taught in Spring 2010 to reduce the shortcomings in theory that the students demonstrated in Fall 2011. In addition, the Spanish faculty revised MA Reading List in Fall 2009: added new readings to list to reflect new material in the curriculum relevant to the field (Afro-Caribbean Literature); renamed it "Reference List" to better reflect its purpose and the MA program expectations. Evaluated and redesigned Comprehensive Exam in Spring 2010 for clarity and relevance to curriculum and reference list.

2010–2011: Scheduled: Outcome C.1 (knowledge of Spanish and Spanish-American fiction and poetry at the graduate level) assessed via analysis of results of Comprehensive Exam. Not performed—no literature students chose Comprehensive Exam as their culminating experience this year. **Alternate assessments performed:** C.1 assessed through Qualifying exam results; Outcomes A.2 and 2A-B in SPAN 249 (Golden Age) term papers. **Conclusions:** Students are not following the prompts to produce fully-developed essays in the Qualifying Exam; the answers need to be structured in the form of an essay with a clear argumentative thesis that is then supported with a strong development of a thematic body. **Adjustments:** 1) The Spanish section edited the Qualifying exam questions for clarity and to ensure consistency in the prompts, based on assessment of the results of the Spring 2010 and Fall 2010 Qualifying Exam results, and on student feedback regarding the Qualifying exam process. 2) We also developed Qualifying Exam policies on feedback, grading, and standards, as guidelines for the faculty; **Additional curriculum adjustment, based on changes to the discipline and continued assessments of student term papers and theses:** As the MA program continues to prepare successful candidates for entry into PhD programs in Hispanic literature, the need for familiarity with critical theory has increased. This has required the addition of a course that exclusively deals with the application of critical theory (taught for the first time in Spring 2010). In Fall 2010, the Spanish graduate faculty approved the addition of SPAN 203 (Applied Theory) as a required course for the MA, to be taught each spring, after students have taken SPAN 202 (Introduction to Literary Theory) in the fall. This new addition strengthens our offerings relevant to Outcomes B.1–4.

2011–2012: Assessment performed: Outcomes A.1 (spoken language proficiency) and D1 (instructional methodology) in SPAN 201 (Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language); Content area competency (C.2) analyzed from comprehensive exam (Linguistics track). Analysis of C.1. was slated for Spring 2011, but no literature students took the comprehensive exam in literature at that time, so we postponed it out of necessity. **Conclusions:** 1) SPAN 201 is currently meeting its objectives, although the program might consider adding further information on plagiarism; 2) The linguistics-track student who took the Comprehensive in Spring 2011 handily met the objectives listed in the SOAP; two of the three students who took the exam in Spring 2012 met the objectives. 3) More literature students are choosing the Thesis instead of the Comprehensive Exam. **Curriculum adjustment:** Added a mandatory Plagiarism Workshop to the Spanish MA Roadmap to better prepare incoming MA students for the research and writing components of the MA, effective Fall 2012. Informally surveyed MA students regarding attitudes toward the Comprehensive and the Thesis; disseminated more detail about the Comprehensive. **Additional curriculum adjustment, based on continued assessments of student term papers and theses:** At the Spring 2012 Spanish MA program retreat, Spanish graduate faculty discussed ongoing efforts to improve student research methods, organization, management of MLA citation style, and timeline to completion of the thesis. After consultation with Graduate Studies, the Spanish faculty decided to prepare a Research Methods course to address these issues more thoroughly.

2012–2013: Scheduled and assessed: Employ rubric for essays: Outcomes A.2, A.3, B.1, B.2, B.3, and B.4 (writing, research methods, and MLA style); Analyze results of the Spanish Language Exam (Outcomes A.1, A.2, and A.3). At our annual retreat in Fall 2013, the Spanish Graduate faculty analyzed the results of these OA performed in AY 2012–2013. **Conclusions:** With regards to method 1, the consensus was that the overall writing level of MA students (as evaluated in SPAN 201, 202, 203, and 249) is appropriate and meets our objectives. Of the outcomes measured (A2 through B4), outcome B4 (mastery of MLA style and format) was the one with the weakest performance overall. With regards to method 2, we noted that the format of the Spanish Language Exam did not accurately reflect the objectives of our MA program.

Adjustments made: As a result of these finding, we decided to address the issues related to method 1 on multiple fronts: First, we revised MLA style instruction and iterative practice throughout the advanced BA courses, particularly SPAN 170 (Senior Seminar, the last class before beginning the MA) to provide incoming MA students with a stronger foundation in MLA style; Second, we added a new MLA Style section to the Spanish Language Exam (taken upon entrance to the MA program); Third, we developed a review for students taking the Language Exam which functions much as a practice GRE, in order to give students a clear idea of the expectations for their writing and use of MLA style. We will revisit this topic at our next retreat to follow-up and evaluate the impact of these changes, making adjustments if necessary. Regarding method 2, we analyzed the exam format at length and compared it to the goals and objectives of our program, and used that as the basis to revise the exam format and update the content. We will evaluate the effectiveness of this adjustment after one cycle with the new exam.

2013–2014: Scheduled and performed: Rubric for presentations: Outcomes A.1, A.3, and D.2 (oral communication, reading comprehension, instructional methodology) in SPAN 201, 202, 203, and 249; **Scheduled, not performed:** Survey of alumni (Outcomes A through D, inclusive). **Conclusions:** Method 1: Overall oral communication, reading comprehension, and instructional methodology met program goals. Instructional methodology was the only area of moderate concern, particularly in SPAN 201, with a small percentage of students displaying organizational or pacing issues. The student performance for oral presentations in one course (SPAN 249) surpassed the instructor's expectations, and was attributed to the posting of the rubric to the online class platform, Blackboard. In the past, many students had summarized too much without analysis, read too much without engaging the class, and had difficulty with managing time for the length of the presentation. Since viewing the rubric in advance, those categories in the rubric appear to have functioned as focal points for students to strengthen the weakest areas of their presentations. It is noteworthy that SPAN 201 is taken most often by first-semester MA students, while 249 is usually taken by third-semester students. Method 2: We evaluated our alumni survey and determined that it was outdated. **Adjustments made:** Method 1: Faculty are now encouraged to post their rubric on Blackboard for students to help clarify goals. SPAN 201 will offer additional in-class practice on lesson planning to address the organizational and pacing issues detected. Method 2: We will update the alumni survey content and format to better address the outcomes listed along with current program offerings and student career paths, and to increase participation in the survey.