**French Program**
**Department of Modern & Classical**
    **Languages & Literatures**
**AY 2015-16**

# Assessment Report for the French Major

## 1. Introduction

The French Section in the Department of Modern & Classical Languages and Literatures has only two full time professors: one tenured and the other a recent tenure-track hire.  In addition, the French Section has 2 or 3 par-time lecturers each semester.  These contingent instructors teach one or two lower-division courses each while teaching elsewhere, and regularly leave our French Section as soon as they are offered a better position in another department or institution.  This situation has as a consequence that the two permanent faculty constantly need to devote a great deal of time with working with the new lecturers for the French Program.

All the administrative and advising work, a program requires, falls on the shoulders of two faculty who therefore have a much larger workload than a program where several faculty can divide this among themselves.  In addition to serving on department, college and university committees, the work the two permanent instructors perform include the following:
- Orient, train, supervise and mentor 2-3 part-time lecturers every semester;
- Direct several independent studies every semester;
- Advise all French students, regularly meeting with them about the French curriculum, and assisting them with their applications to graduate school, scholarships, and career choices;
- Serve as Academic Advisors for French Single Subject Students and participate in the activities this advising requires (meetings, student portfolio evaluations, mentoring, etc.)
- Manage all curriculum issues, revisions, and class scheduling for French;
- Regularly participate in outreach activities to recruit students for French;
- Mentor McNair and Honor students and direct their theses and projects;
- Advise *Le Cercle Français*, the club for the French students.

In spring 2016, the tenured professor was able to take a one-semester sabbatical in spring and needed to prepare the non-tenured faculty to take over all the above described tasks by herself.[1]

---

[1] The tenured faculty's last sabbatical was sixteen years ago.  This was due to the lack of permanent teaching personnel in French for several years.  Indeed there was only one permanent French professor to administer and teach three programs: the minor and the major in French, as well as the single credential in French.

Additionally, all upper-division classes are taught by the two permanent faculty.  The tenure-track faculty has to deal with new course preparations every semester, developing her expertise and preparing the material to teach it, and teach these courses for the first time.  Also, because of the sabbatical of her colleague, the tenure-track professor had to direct several independent studies to make sure that her French students were on track to graduate on time.  Because of the personnel issues and obligations, our work assessing courses in the French major was minimal: this is a workload issue which needs to be taken into consideration here.  It is difficult to do constant assessment of our classes with limited personnel who are often overburdened because of the many different demands placed on them.

## 2.  Assessment

**1. What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?** List all program outcomes you assessed (if you assessed an outcome not listed on your department SOAP please indicate explain). Do not describe the measures or benchmarks in this section.  Also, please only describe major assessment activities in this report. The G.E. Committee will issue a separate call for G.E. assessment reports.

French chose to assess its French 149, "Voices of Africa" course because it is not only an elective course for French majors and minors, but also a GE area C2-IC Humanities class.  To do so, we chose GE Outcome #2 which is described as follows:
>	*Recognize, describe, and interpret works of the human imagination or*
>	*intellect in their cultural context, either subjectively or objectively.*

This outcome was described more precisely in the syllabus for French 149.  Indeed, upon completing the French 149 C2-IC course, the students will be able to:
- Become familiar with some of the cultures and traditions of Sub-Saharan Africa through the reading and discussion of literary texts originally published in French.
- Understand the cultural and historical links between Africa and the Western World.
- Discover different cultures and traditions to better understand our own.
- Understand how these literary texts, the concepts they proposed and the issues they raised, have not only shaped the world Africans live in today, but also influenced our own thinking and understanding of their and our world.
- Interpret these texts in their cultural context.

In addition to the general outcome, the following three class-specific outcomes were also included:
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view;
- Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual and cultural activities;
- Working to improve your ability to express yourself orally and/or in writing.

**2. What instruments (assignment) did you use to assess them?** If the assignment (activity, survey, etc.) does not correspond to the activities indicated in the timeline on the SOAP, please indicate why. Please clearly indicate how the instrument (assignment) is able to measure the outcome. If after evaluating the assessment you concluded that the measure was not clearly aligned or did not adequately measure the outcome please discuss this in your report. Please include the benchmark or standard for student performance in your assessment report (if it is stated in your SOAP then this information can just be copied into the report). An example of an expectation or standard would be "On outcome 2.3

The assessment we undertook in the French 149 course was based on five of the assignments the students wrote:
- Their first and last essays for the class;
- Their first and last in-class writing exercises; and
- Their final exam.

The two in-class exercises were used to establish students' basic writing competencies and also to insure that they did not cheat or plagiarize, which more often happens in bigger classes with mostly non-major or non-minor students. These basic writing competencies were then confirmed with their essays and final exam.

The evaluation rubric that French developed for assessing student essays in French 149 is based on the following sources:
- http://library.drmasonsclasses.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Grading-Rubric-blocks.pdf
- http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/criteria.pdf
- http://teaching.berkeley.edu/sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/Rubric%20for%20Evaluating%20Written%20Assignments%20.pdf

A student essay is evaluated in the following seven different areas: organization, content, development, grammar/mechanics, style, format, and overall presentation.

Each French 149 student needs to have a score of at least 70 out of 100 points in each essay to meet the course outcome for our major and minor in French, and a humanities course of the C2-IC designation as delineated at the beginning of this document.

**3. What did you discover from the data?** Discuss the student performance in relation to your standards or expectations. Be sure to clearly indicate how many students did (or did not) meet the standard for each outcome measured. Where possible, indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses in student performance on the outcome(s).

As stated above, the students' essays were evaluated in the following seven different areas: organization, content, development, grammar/mechanics, style, format, and overall presentation. From the data that was gathered, we discovered the following:

**1. Organization:**
In terms of organization of their paper, most students are in the competent to adequate range. They often needed to be reminded as to how to write a solid essay and its main elements. They also neglected to divide their texts into effective paragraphs and were advised in this respect. However, they do know how to write a solid introduction and a good conclusion.

**2. Content:**
Most students scored between competent to adequate. They often had difficulties with finding a topic to examine and developing a suitable thesis for their essays. This is precisely why we assign journals that students write at home. In the informal and oral feedback we do in class after the students have turned in their first essays, they explained that their journaling gave them a starting point for their essays.

**3. Development** (Ideas & Flow)**:**
Since many students in the previous French 149 classes often had trouble organizing their essays in a coherent fashion, we had included this third category which we entitled "Development". This addressed the issue of developing ideas and making sure that these were expressed thoroughly and in a systematic way. Often the students conveyed what was clearly obvious to them without elaborating why this was obvious to them or why they chose to state what they stated. In order words, the students often stated their ideas assuming the reader understood these rather than explaining them. Again, instruction focused on correcting this.

**4. Grammar & Mechanics:**
This is an area where many non-native, as well as some native, English-language speakers, often had issues. They had trouble distinguishing between academic and non-academic language. In addition, they struggled with verb and tense forms; did not seem to differentiate between "I and me", "she and her", or "that and who"; or inappropriately use "its" and "it's" for example.

We often had to remind students of these features of English grammar that we cannot cover at length in this content class. To address these questions, we created a document, *How Do I Write in Edited Standard Written English (or ESWE)?*, available on Blackboard in the *How To* section.[2] Our students use this list of common errors as a check list, and thus learn to avoid possible grammatical pitfalls in their written assignments. In this way, we emphasize the importance of good writing skills and teach our students how to revise their own texts.

**5. Style:**
As mentioned earlier in the present document, some students do not always distinguish between academic and non-academic or formal and informal language. This is precisely why we included this fifth category in our assessment of students' essays. We want them to be familiar with style or what we would call effective usage of rhetorical devices and tone, as well as creative use of sentence structure and coordination.

---

[2] Adapted from Barbara E. Walvoord & Virginia J. Anderson's 1998 book, *Effective Grading*, published in San-Francisco by Jossey-Bass Publishers.

**6. Format:**
Most, if not all, students are familiar with APA or MLA formatting.  We direct those who do not to our document entitled, *How to Research & Document my Essays?*, available on Blackboard.  We also encouraged them to take the Academic Success Workshops dealing with such issues as *Scholarly Journals*, *Finding, Citing & Analysis Images*, and *Citing Sources*.

**7. Overall Presentation:**
This criterion encouraged our students to present their essays in a clear and pleasing way.  It addresses the question as to whether the students have been thorough in their essays and included the following on their essays: a title, introduction, body, conclusion, and list of sources.

Most, if not all, students met or exceeded the minimum requirement of such an outcome at the end of the semester.  Additionally, they were pleased with improving their writing skills.

**4. What changes did you make as a result of the data?** Describe how the information from the assessment activity was reviewed and what action was taken based on the analysis of the assessment data.

Some of the issues mentioned above where addressed in class as soon as we identified them, such as the matters of organizing or developing an essay.  This made it possible for the students to working on them.  In addition, we encouraged them, individually and in class, to take the Academic Success Workshops dealing with such issues, and use the services the Learning Center in the Library and the English Writing Center in the School of Education Building.  We even offered extra-credits to the students who made use of these resources and could document their participation in these programs.

We have not had a chance to make any changes as a result of the complete data we gathered, however.  This class was taught and assessed in Fall 2015.  It was not taught in Spring 2016.  So no further concrete action has been taken since then.  We have not had the opportunity to discuss our course of action regarding this issue.  We had made several adjustments previously such as developing several documents and guidelines, available to students on Blackboard, which are discussed at length in this class as well as other courses.

**5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2016-2017 AY?** List the outcomes and measures or assessment activities you will use to evaluate them. These activities should be the same as those indicated on your current SOAP timeline; if they are not please explain.

N/A.  One of the two permanent professors just came back from sabbatical.  Additionally, we just had an unexpected vacancy in one of our courses the week before the start of instruction and we focused on filling that vacancy and orienting and training the new contingent hire.  So we have not had the opportunity to discuss our assessment plan for this year.

| |
|---|
| **6. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?** Please provide a brief description of progress made on each item listed in the action plan. If no progress has been made on an action item, simply state "no progress." |
| N/A.  See our introduction and Item #5 above. |
| **7. Additional Guidelines:** If you have not fully described the assignment then please attach a copy of the questions or assignment guidelines. If you are using a rubric and did not fully describe this rubric (or the criteria being used) than please attach a copy of the rubric. If you administered a survey please attach a copy of the survey so that the Learning Assessment Team (LAT) can review the questions. |
| The following documents are attached to this assessment:<br>(1)  Example of Student Work Assessed<br>(2)  Grading Rubric for Written Assessment<br>(3)  Student Evaluation Sheet<br>(4)  Writing in ESWE |