Degree/Certificate: BA and BA Ed

Major/Option: French
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Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2013-14

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Part I – for the 2013-14 academic year: Except for the formatting, this section **nearly identical** to previous years' templates for the Program SLO Assessment reports. Because we have begun asking Deans to create College-Level Summary Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

1. **Student Learning Outcome**: The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

Cross-Cultural Understanding. The ability to draw comparisons between the students' native culture and the language culture under study and/or among the cultures of the various regions and nations of the language culture.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.
    _____*SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;*
    ___x__*SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;*
    _____*SLO met without change required*

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

This SLO was assessed in a fourth year French course on 20th century literature during Winter 2014 quarter. Methods used were midterm and final exams to assess comprehension and expression and, more importantly, student essays and class discussion to assess the learning objective. Essays and discussion focused not only on understanding the literary works studied, but also on reflecting upon the ways in which authors adapted and built on one another's ideas according to their own cultural experience, gender or colonial history.   Essays as well as discussion topics were chosen with an emphasis on encouraging students to apply the ideas in the works studied to students' own experiences of culture, gender or post-colonialism as well.

4. **Observations gathered from data**: Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.
   a. Findings:

For the most part I was surprised and impressed by the students' ability to write and speak perceptively in French about rather difficult concepts, and the extent to which they were able to analyze not only the authors' objectives but also how the ideas raised related to other cultures and to their own lives and particular moment in history. Some of the topics raised by the literary texts we studied were religious hypocrisy, self-delusion, the formation of gender identities, and adult influences on children. All of these topics leant themselves to comparisons of how these issues are addressed in various cultures, and students were able to come up with some very interesting observations.   One problem I encountered was the difficulty some students had in distinguishing between their own point of view and that of the author, whom they sometimes perceived as reflecting their own perspective despite substantial evidence to the contrary. This reveals a lack of maturity in critical thinking. The other main challenge was having adequate language skills in French to express themselves on such challenging topics. Many of them required a significant amount of feedback from the professor to come up with well-thought out and constructed essays.

   b. Analysis of findings:

As professor for this course, I was fortunate in having a diverse and mature group of students who were capable of interesting reflections on the difficult material we studied in class. It was a very international class for a small group and included students from France, Switzerland, Russia, Senegal and Lebanon. This diversity greatly facilitated the attainment of the learning objective since the students themselves, with very little coaching form me, were eager to compare their personal experiences and specific perspectives on the material, many of which clearly demonstrated different cultural or gender perspectives. I am less sure that this course would have been as successful with a different and less motivated group of students. I also wonder, in a class with a combination of native and non-native speakers, if the non-natives had sufficient opportunity and confidence to express themselves.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**

   a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

Although we occasionally offer a course specifically addressing this SLO – Francophone literature, which emphasizes literary works from different parts of the French speaking world – for the most part this SLO must be addressed to some extent throughout our curriculum and we must continue to explore

ways to do so.   The issues identified above can be addressed through more specific study guides on difficult readings to help students identify essential points, by more "brain-storming" sessions with the class before writing essays, and by prepared oral presentations to help students organize their thoughts and express them correctly and effectively.

           b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

All of these changes are currently being implemented throughout our curriculum.

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

I find it difficult to think of another way to address this particular SLO other than by assessing its success in a specific course, since it is one of the many objectives that almost all of the courses in the major attempt to address in one way or another, depending on the focus of the course.

In response to the university's accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, this section has been added. This should be viewed as a follow up to the previous year's findings. In other words, begin with findings from 2012-13, and then describe actions taken during 2013-14 to improve student learning along, provide a brief summary of findings, and describe possible next steps.

***Working definition for closing the loop**: Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning." Adapted 8.21.13 from http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html.*

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s)** assessed for 2012-13

Demonstrate knowledge of major themes, genres, movements in the history of the literature of the language culture under study

2. **Strategies implemented** during 2013-14 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2013-14 assessment activities.

For the first time in 2013-14 our Intro to literature class (Fren 330) was offered as a four rather than a three credit course. Not only does this bring the course into line with the other major 300 level courses which are four credits, but it also allows us to devote more time to meeting this objective.

The extra time available for this course allowed us to go more slowly and to cover a little more material. The slower pace encouraged more student participation and permitted the implementation of some of the changes outlined above – more class discussion, more work with comprehension and "perception" questions based on readings, more brainstorming with the class before writing essays and taking tests.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.

All of the strategies outlined above are ways to help students to better digest and remember the material. Engagement of students in class and their comments on teaching evaluations seem to indicate that these strategies have been effective learning tools. We should continue to find ways of improving and expanding our use of these tools to maximize student learning and in general move to some degree toward the model of the "flipped" classroom, in which the professor functions essentially as a guide to student learning as opposed to a provider of information.

One challenge with which I continue to struggle is how to deal with students who miss substantial numbers of class meetings, miss participating in class activities, and therefore fall behind the rest of the class. Perhaps more regular quizzes which require class presence would be a way of encouraging better attendance and would help them see more quickly the negative consequences of absences.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery,** etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

Despite the extra time in class I was unable to find the time to organize and implement one of last year's suggestions, research projects leading to class presentations, even though this is an activity I usually do in this type of course. I plan to return to this practice in the future.

I also believe we still need to find a better assessment tool for this objective, based on what students have actually studied in their courses and on collaboration between instructors to determine what they should know by the time they complete their majors. More communication between instructors to reinforce learning from one course to another is still needed.