

Macalester College
Department of French and Francophone Studies
Assessment Plan
2014

I. Department Student Learning Statement:

The Department of French and Francophone Studies endorses Macalester College's mission of providing its students with a broad liberal arts education that emphasizes the vital importance of internationalism and multiculturalism. The study of the francophone world includes the cultures of both European and non-European countries, like France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, African countries, the Caribbean, the islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, where French is the language of communication and artistic expression. The Department seeks to provide students with advanced proficiency in French and with cross-cultural proficiency. The Department has the following objectives:

- to prepare majors and minors in acquiring advanced proficiency skills in French language, that prepares them effectively to communicate with native speakers, with an emphasis on speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- to prepare majors and minors in acquiring advanced proficiency in French and Francophone cultures and literatures, intellectual and artistic movements in various periods, and critical thinking;
- to prepare majors and minors to engage with a variety of texts and media through diverse theoretical and critical approaches;
- to provide all students with the opportunity to acquire, as part of a liberal arts education, the knowledge of the language, literature and cultures of France and Francophone countries through courses, internships, study abroad, and service-learning, and co-curricular activities;
- to provide students with courses, taught in French or English, that address diverse disciplinary areas as they relate to France and the francophone world.
- to provide language competencies to students not majoring in French appropriate for study in their own fields, for future professional needs or for personal enrichment.

II. Department Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1. Majors can read, write, speak, and comprehend French at an advanced level (Advanced Mid or Advanced High or even Superior level, according to ACTFL guidelines).

Outcome 1. Majors will be able to read a variety of texts from different time periods, including literary texts, critical essays, historical essays, newspaper articles. As a result of critical and purposeful reading, they will be able to summarize, critique, interpret and decode the arguments of the texts they have read.

Outcome 2. Majors will be able to write a clear and coherently developed critical essay in French, such as a critical analysis essay, argumentative research paper, film analysis, literature review, and other types of writing. Success in Outcome 2 is closely linked to achieving Outcome 1, as students can only write successfully if they read at an advanced level.

Outcome 3. Majors will be able to speak French and communicate effectively, engaging in conversations at an Advanced-Mid or Advanced-High level, according to ACTFL guidelines. This includes giving a formal presentation in a course, or at the capstone presentations, as well as successfully completing oral exams in classes and participating in regular classroom discussions in French.

Outcome 4. Majors will have an Advanced level of listening comprehension. They will be able to listen to native-speaker conversations and news reports and watch video clips and films in French. These listening activities take place in all courses of the curriculum. For the major, it occurs in FREN 305 (listening to radio and watching televised news reports), and participating in labs and groupuscule sections. In advanced courses (400-level), the listening activities take place in class discussions and through watching films, listening to music and current events reports on television, and participating in department events as majors, such as the capstone presentations and in the senior oral exams where they must rely on their listening comprehension skills to answer questions.

Goal 2. Majors demonstrate a well-articulated, advanced knowledge of the language, literatures and cultures of French and Francophone countries and communities.

Outcome 5. Majors will be able to write and speak fluently about French and Francophone countries and communities after they have read a variety of texts in French in coursework at Macalester and abroad, and in their capstone or honors research. They will be able to conduct in-depth research on a specific topic, for example, related to their capstone project or their honors thesis project.

Outcome 6. Majors will be able to write in advanced fluent French about French and Francophone literature and culture through completing different types of writing assignments in upper-level French classes (at Macalester and abroad) including but not limited to argumentative research papers and through writing their capstone or honors thesis.

Outcome 7. Majors will be able to speak coherently and fluently in French on a variety of topics in French and Francophone literature and culture.

Goal 3. Majors can conduct original research on French and Francophone literatures and cultures.

Outcome 8. Students will be able to synthesize and critique information that they have gathered and pose suitable questions to formulate a strong and innovative research thesis and build upon existing knowledge. They must be able to assemble a solid research bibliography for each of these research projects.

Goal 4. Majors attain sophisticated cross-cultural and linguistic proficiency after participating competently in local, national, and international French and Francophone communities in a range of social and professional contexts.

Outcome 9. Majors will be able to display cross-cultural proficiency in French and Francophone local, national or international communities through on-campus courses, study abroad opportunities, internships in the Twin Cities and abroad, and through service-learning projects.

III. Department Assessment Strategies:

Before outlining the specific strategies related to each outcome, a brief note on the types of assessment strategies that our department uses. We have some assessment strategies that are part of regular coursework for the major, and extra activities designed specifically for the purpose of assessment. The direct assessment activities occur during a French major's senior year, and include the senior written exam (two-hour written exam, evaluated by all faculty in November), the senior oral exam (one-hour oral exam for each major, evaluated by all faculty in February), and the senior capstone project (application and research bibliography evaluated by all faculty in October, written paper of 25-30 pages evaluated by all faculty in April, and 15-minute presentation at the Capstones evaluated by all faculty in late April or early May). Optionally, the major may choose to do the senior honors thesis instead of the capstone; this includes research bibliography, written paper of 40-80 pages, thesis defense of one hour, and 20-minute presentation at the Capstones).

These direct assessment activities involve all department faculty and they are designed to assess the outcomes for our French major: their language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension), their knowledge of French & Francophone culture and literature, and their research skills and cross-cultural proficiency and sensitivity. While these outcomes are also evaluated through assessment by individual faculty members who are teaching French majors in their upper-level courses, the three senior activities (written exam, oral exam, and capstone project) are assessed by all of the faculty members of the department.

Outcome 1. Majors will be able to read a variety of texts from different time periods, including literary texts, critical essays, historical essays, newspaper articles. As a result of critical and purposeful reading, they will be able to summarize, critique, interpret and decode the arguments of the texts they have read.

Assessment Strategy: - Faculty assess Outcome #1 during advanced level coursework and during the senior oral exams. Many advanced courses require students to summarize, critique, interpret and decode the texts that they have read (reading responses, reading summaries, film analyzes and the like); these written and oral exercises allow faculty to evaluate their ability to read an advanced variety of texts. Each major must also begin his or her senior oral exam with a concise summary and brief interpretation of the six texts that they have chosen to present, and faculty examiners evaluate their reading abilities through the summaries and interpretations that they offer during these oral exams.

Outcome 2. Majors will be able to write a clear and coherently developed critical essay in French, such as a critical analysis essay, argumentative research paper, film analysis, literature review, and other types of writing. Success in Outcome 2 is closely linked to achieving Outcome 1, as students can only write successfully if they read at an advanced level.

Assessment Strategy: All faculty assess Outcome #2 through an examination and evaluation of the written portion of the capstone project or honors thesis project to determine each major's level of written French. As a whole, the faculty collectively assigns each major the grade of "pass" "honors" or "highest honors" for the capstone or honors project.

Outcome 3. Majors will be able to speak French and communicate effectively, engaging in conversations at an Advanced-Mid or Advanced-High level, according to ACTFL guidelines. This includes giving a formal presentation in a course, or at the capstone presentations, as well as successfully completing oral exams in classes and participating in regular classroom discussions in French.

Assessment Strategy: All faculty assess Outcome #3 when they listen to and evaluate the formal presentations that majors give at the end of their studies during their capstone presentation or honors defense. As a whole the faculty collectively assigns each major the grade of "pass" (the equivalent of Advanced-Mid), "honors" (Advanced-High) or "highest honors (Superior) for their spoken French skills at the capstone presentations.

Outcome 4. Majors will have an Advanced level of listening comprehension. They will be able to listen to native-speaker conversations and news reports and watch video clips and films in

French. These listening activities take place in all courses of the curriculum. For the major, it occurs in FREN 305 (listening to radio and watching televised news reports), and participating in labs and groupuscule sections. In advanced courses (400-level), the listening activities take place in class discussions and through watching films, listening to music and current events reports on television, and participating in department events as majors, such as the capstone presentations and in the senior oral exams where they must rely on their listening comprehension skills to answer questions.

Assessment Strategy: Listening comprehension is evaluated mainly through students' ability to synthesize what they have heard and then respond to the oral prompt either with a question or a comment that reflects a solid comprehension of the dialogue, presentation, broadcast, etc. All faculty assess Outcome #4 by evaluating the listening comprehension of students as both presenters and audience members who ask and answer questions actively during senior oral exams and at the capstone presentations.

Outcome 5. Majors will be able to write and speak fluently about French and Francophone countries and communities after they have read a variety of texts in French in coursework at Macalester and abroad, and in their capstone or honors research. They will be able to conduct in-depth research on a specific topic, for example, related to their capstone project or their honors thesis project.

Assessment Strategy: Faculty assess Outcome #5 through an examination of the majors' ability to present information on a variety of different French and Francophone subjects in upper-level coursework and on their senior oral exams. The senior oral exams are based on each major's personal choice of texts or films, but their choice must encompass a broad variety of French and francophone communities (by historical period or francophone region or genre). Faculty also assess this outcome through an examination of the bibliographies that students prepare for their capstone or honors theses, and they ask questions on the senior written exams that test students on their knowledge of French and Francophone countries and communities.

Outcome 6. Majors will be able to write in advanced fluent French about French and Francophone literature and culture through completing different types of writing assignments in upper-level French classes (at Macalester and abroad) including but not limited to argumentative research papers and through writing their capstone or honors thesis.

Assessment Strategy: Faculty assess Outcome #6 through an examination of papers that majors have written for their upper-level courses and for their capstone or honors projects. Additionally faculty assess majors' knowledge of French & Francophone culture and literature on the senior written exam, whose main question is: "Synthesize what you have learned in

courses in the department and during your studies abroad and speak as well of your projects and desires related to your French diploma. Your essay must allow evaluators to appreciate your command of the French language, your understanding of French and francophone culture (3 different examples), your ability to analyze and reflect on literary texts, films or paintings (3 different examples), all while using various critical tools that you have acquired while at Macalester.”

Outcome 7. Majors will be able to speak coherently and fluently in French on a variety of topics in French and Francophone literature and culture.

Assessment Strategy: Faculty assess Outcome #7 by listening to majors who are making formal presentations or performances in upper-level courses, and in formal discussions with faculty in French, such as during the senior oral exams and the capstone presentation or honors thesis defense.

Outcome 8. Students will be able to synthesize and critique information that they have gathered and pose suitable questions to formulate a strong and innovative research thesis and build upon existing knowledge. They must be able to assemble a solid research bibliography for each of these research projects.

Assessment Strategy: Faculty assess Outcome #8 through their evaluation of the research papers that students have written for upper level courses and the capstone or honors thesis papers. All faculty examine together the majors’ applications for the capstone project or honors thesis, including their preliminary research bibliographies that they have completed for the application. Faculty also evaluate the research bibliographies in the final version of the capstone or honors thesis. Faculty assess students’ research skills in research papers informed by the library sessions and/or direct instruction in research methodology provided in all upper level courses including FREN 306.

Outcome 9. Majors will be able to display cross-cultural proficiency in French and Francophone local, national or international communities through on-campus courses, study abroad opportunities, internships in the Twin Cities and abroad, and through service-learning projects.

Assessment Strategy: Faculty assess Outcome #9 through an examination of the reports that majors complete on internships completed abroad or in the Twin Cities, and they question the students during the written senior exams on the cross-cultural proficiency that they gained during their study abroad experience. Faculty also examine the reflective essay that the majors write after returning from their study abroad experience to assess their cross-cultural competence.

IV. Timeline for Implementing Assessment Strategies

We are currently using almost all of these assessment strategies and plan to continue using them during the next four years.

One new item that we will implement this year and in the following three years is the post-study-abroad reflective essay. In the past, we have always asked students to discuss their study abroad experience in their senior written exam, but we believe that having students write an essay immediately after returning to campus would be helpful in assessing the impact of study abroad on their course of study.

In the past, we have used additional assessment activities, such as surveys of majors and minors. However, the faculty feels that those assessment methods were not that helpful, especially because they only focused on one or two outcomes and therefore did not offer a cohesive view or holistic approach to our department's assessment plan. We have also had a low response rate in these recent surveys, and faculty feel that we cannot obtain a significant indication of overall student satisfaction or dissatisfaction from the very small number of surveys completed. We will therefore not continue with those student surveys in the next four years.

We do however receive student feedback from other indirect assessment methods, such as our course evaluations forms designed for our upper-level courses and some of the questions that we ask during the senior oral exam. Those exam questions that focus on a students' assessment of their abilities, similar to a student survey or an exit interview, give us some of the same information that we received through student surveys that we conducted in past years. We will continue to ask these questions in order to receive feedback from students and make changes to the outcomes and goals as needed. If, after a year or so, we feel that we need more information from the students' perspectives, we will go back to creating and conducting student surveys.