Expected Outcomes: Outcome One: Written Spanish Language Skills.

Graduating MA students will communicate coherently in written Spanish.

Assessment methods

Method: Comprehensive Written Examination.

Each MA student will be evaluated based on his/her performance on the written comprehensive examinations. These exams consist of ten different sections, each related to all genres of Spanish Peninsular Literature (from the Medieval period to the present day), Spanish American Literature (from the Colonial period to the present day), as well as the major areas of Hispanic Linguistics (i.e. History of the Spanish Language, Dialectology, Second Language Acquisition, Syntax, and Phonetics).

Findings:

As far as the quality of their written expression, the MA students ranked among the top five percent of all graduate students taking the written exam.

How did you use findings for improvement?

We are pleased with the MA students’ excellence in written communication. It would be nice to solicit their help in our writing workshops so that graduate students with poorer written Spanish could learn from the highly skilled MA students.

Additional comments:

Traditionally the strongest graduate students are those who choose the thesis option. It is normal for them to outperform the MHS students in both writing and speaking. However, this was not the case this past year since both Ma and MHS students performed evenly.

Expected Outcomes: Outcome Two: Spoken Spanish Language Skills.

Graduating MA students will demonstrate competence in oral communication skills in Spanish.

Assessment methods

Method: Oral Interview and Recording.

Students submit an oral recording of spontaneous speech in Spanish over the subject of their choice. They engage in a sight-reading exercise in which they are asked to perform a cold reading of an unknown text in Spanish and engage in prompted conversation about the subject.

Findings:

All of the five MA students were ranked as very good to good Spanish speakers able to negotiate a wide variety of grammatical structures with a diverse vocabulary as well as to gauge properly speech registers and to express themselves with a native or near-native pronunciation. One of them, however, is native of the language.

How did you use findings for improvement?
Except for the native speaker, the other four were encouraged to go abroad and live in Spanish speaking countries. Also, they were encouraged to become active participants among the Spanish speaking community wherever they go. This would greatly help them throughout their PhD programs in other institutions.

Additional comments:

We did now include in our thesis oral defense guidelines a recommendation that it takes place both in English and in Spanish so as to prepare MA students for high-level academic discourse both in the target language (Spanish) and in English (a native language for the majority of our graduate students but a non-native tongue for many and one they must be ready to encounter in scholarly circles.)

Expected Outcomes: Outcome Three: Hispanic Cultural Knowledge.

Graduating M.A. students in Spanish will understand the major literary and cultural movements in the Spanish-speaking world.

Assessment methods

Method: Comprehensive Written Examination.

Each MA student will be evaluated based on his/her performance on the written comprehensive examinations. These exams consist of ten different sections, each related to all genres of Spanish Peninsular Literature (from the Medieval period to the present day), Spanish American Literature (from the Colonial period to the present day), as well as the major areas of Hispanic Linguistics (i.e. History of the Spanish Language, Dialectology, Second Language Acquisition, Syntax, and Phonetics).

Findings:

The students are able successfully to comment in an informed and erudite manner on each subject area, especially their particular area of emphasis. The MA students fared better than the MHS students as a whole on the exam. They failed fewer sections and successfully challenged their lackluster sections on the retake. Nevertheless, MA students were struggling to find time in their schedule for taking the comprehensive exams; they tended to concentrate more on the exam preparation than on their thesis completion.

How did you use findings for improvement?

MA students are advised now to combine their exam preparation with their thesis research and writing. They are encouraged to commence the thesis project at an earlier point in their graduate curriculum and achieve substantial progress on the thesis prior to taking their comprehensive exams.

Additional comments:

We have re-adjust the comprehensive exam structure for thesis students, allowing them to opt out of certain sections so as to concentrate more on their thesis.

Method: Oral Interview and Recording.

Students submit an oral recording of spontaneous speech in Spanish over the subject of their choice. They engage in a sight-reading exercise in which they are asked to perform a cold reading of an unknown text in Spanish and engage in prompted conversation about the subject.

Findings:
Each student can speak widely and at length on most of the subject matters.

How did you use findings for improvement?

We are pleased with this outcome and did not find a need to change it.

Additional comments:

None.

**Method**: Thesis Project.

Students embark on an original research project related to a topic in Hispanic Linguistics and/or Literature. The majority of primary sources and/or studies will be in Spanish; however, students can elect whether to write the thesis in either Spanish or English.

**Findings**:

Students showed great range in their research topics and in their approach to the subject. All of the theses included either a linguistic or literary theoretical emphasis.

How did you use findings for improvement?

We were pleased with the outcome. We shall continue to strive for this diversity.

Additional comments:

None.

**Expected Outcomes**: Outcome Four: Independent Investigation.

Graduating M.A. students in Spanish will engage in a substantial and original research project related to Hispanic Linguistics & Literature.

**Assessment methods**

**Method**: Thesis Project.

Students embark on an original research project related to a topic in Hispanic Linguistics and/or Literature. The majority of primary sources and/or studies will be in Spanish; however, students can elect whether to write the thesis in either Spanish or English.

**Findings**:

Five students successfully defended an original thesis project: two in Hispanic Linguistics, two in Spanish Peninsular Literature, and one in Spanish American Literature. Three out of the four successful MA students required additional time to complete their project, whereas only two were able to finish in a timely manner.

How did you use findings for improvement?

We streamlined and formalized the thesis-writing procedures so as to increase awareness on behalf of thesis director, committee members and students of the responsibilities of each party, guidelines for each thesis component and the goal dates for completion. Additionally, we have changed our advising so that MA students will initiate their research at an earlier stage in their curriculum. Also, we instituted two new thesis-related policies: 1) A thesis committee must consist of at least one tenured faculty member; 2) Any student enrolled in thesis hours must demonstrate at the end of the semester substantial evidence of his/her progress toward the thesis completion. For students in the initial stages, this can be a 10-15 page written and oral proposal defense. For students further along in the process, it ideally...
would consist of a completed thesis, although at least a completed chapter could suffice.

Additional comments:

We have implemented a thesis evaluation form to be completed by thesis directors, committee members, and students as a helpful assessment tool. Also, we provide sample thesis calendars for incoming students and a step-by-step guide from start to finish for MA students. All thesis students and directors must create at the start of the semester a syllabus outlining the student's thesis goals for that term and a timeline for completion; this will be submitted to the Graduate Program Director and the Department Chair.