

REVIEW OF THE M.A. IN LANGUAGES, LITERATURE, AND CULTURES

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 16.0901

German Language and Literature

OVERVIEW

The **M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures within the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures houses four degree programs: a B.A. in French and Francophone Studies, B.A. in German, a B.A. in Spanish, and M.A. in Language, Literatures, and Cultures. In addition, the department offers minors in Classical Studies, East Asian Studies, French and Francophone Studies, German, Italian Studies, and Spanish and an Instructional Technology in World Languages graduate certificate. The last review of the M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures program occurred in 2013-2014.

The M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures program curriculum provides students flexibility to design a plan of study that best meets their academic goals. Students may focus on teaching or non-teaching areas in one or two languages.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2014-2021

M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrollments	21	20	21	21	20	18	11	17
Degrees	12	10	10	5	5	7	9	5

Table notes: Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The program seeks provide all students with:

1. the opportunity to acquire advanced competency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading the foreign language through study of its linguistic features and the culture and literature of countries where the language is spoken.
2. the critical thinking and analytical skills that enable graduates to be discerning interpreters of cultural material of diverse kinds.
3. the preparation necessary to meet professional and personal goals in a variety of professions or Ph.D. programs.
4. the practical skills and intellectual training to function as responsible, knowledgeable, and engaged global citizens.

Student learning outcomes

1. for culture: acquiring the advanced knowledge and skills to interpret a variety of artifacts from high to pop culture within the social, political, and economic context in which they were produced.
2. for linguistics: the study of the history, structure, and organization of language and the cognitive processes that govern its acquisition and use.

Program review conducted 2021-2022. Report submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Fall 2022

3. for literature: the opportunity to read, analyze, discuss, and write critically on literary texts of different periods in their cultural contexts, and to conduct literary research in the target language.
4. for pedagogy: acquiring advanced knowledge of current theory, methodologies, and issues, and competency in the practical application of theory and methods in the foreign language classroom.

Program curriculum (2021-2022)

M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures requires 33 credit hours. This includes 9 credit hours of core courses, 9 credit hours of courses within an area of emphasis, and 18 credit hours in the language concentration (note that some courses may count in multiple categories). Students must complete a thesis or pass a comprehensive exam.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.
The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2021)

16 tenure track faculty members (8 Professors, 7 Associate Professors, and 1 Assistant Professors)
13 non-tenure track faculty members (9 full-time, 4 part-time, totaling 11.4 FTE)

Specialized accreditation

There are no plans to pursue specialized accreditation at this time.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The societal need for those with linguistic and cultural competency in Spanish has only increased over the review period, and all signs point to that need increasing in urgency. The faculty's decision to focus on Spanish in the new M.A. program is supported by extensive amounts of data and social trends.

Demography

There are 490 million people in the world who speak Spanish as their native language and Spanish is the official language of 18 countries. Unlike other languages, like Chinese, varieties of Spanish are mutually intelligible, meaning a student who speaks Spanish develops the very real skill of being able to communicate with half a billion people on the planet. Additionally, after English, Spanish competes with Mandarin as the top language in the world that people choose to learn. At U.S. universities, Spanish has the highest enrollments of any world language, according to the Modern Language Association's most recent report (2016). The Pew Research Center reports that "between 2010 and 2019, the Latino share of the total U.S. population increased from 16 percent to 18 percent" and that "Latinos accounted for about half (52 percent) of all U.S. population growth over this period." In Illinois, 1.6 million people, 13 percent of the state's total population, speak Spanish at home. The US is currently the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

Employment

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recently published a report that highlights the employment benefits of speaking a second language. According to the report, 9 out of 10 U.S. employers rely on employees with languages skills other than English. Fifty-six percent of employers say their world language demand will increase in the next five years. Not surprisingly, Spanish skills are a prized asset: "Eighty-five percent of U.S. employers say they're reliant on Spanish, making it by the far the most sought-after language." This need for employees with world language skills is not limited to countries beyond the borders of the United States. Forty-seven percent of employers have a need for language skills *exclusively* for the domestic market. A quarter of employers report having lost business due to a lack of language skills. The Department of Defense continues to list Spanish on its Strategic Language List.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) published a report in 2018 that demonstrated the acute need in Illinois for qualified teachers in languages other than English, especially Spanish.

More than Google Translate

The new M.A. in Spanish will do more than just polish students' Spanish language skills. It will promote a nuanced and robust understanding of the cultures and histories of the Spanish speaking world. Neither languages nor people exist in a vacuum; they exist in ever evolving contexts. The ability to recognize and make sense of these contexts is vital to today's students and tomorrow's leaders. As recent current events make clear, we live in a time of intense and increasing polarization. In the public sphere, logical fallacies abound, ad hominem attacks overshadow grounded argumentation, and intellectual humility in the face of complex problems gets lost in a culture of memefication. Amidst such disconcerting trends, what is all too often lacking is the sort of cross-cultural understanding that by its nature the new M.A. in Spanish will promote and facilitate.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The APC made three major recommendations resulting from the previous program review. The first two were aimed at improving program coherence, the third at assessment of student learning outcomes.

1. The first was to *consolidate the number of advising tracks*. Prior to the previous program review, a student could choose from among nine distinct tracks (e.g., Spanish literature, Linguistics, Transatlantic studies). In response to APC recommendations, faculty redesigned the program to have two tracks, which is the current configuration: 1) literary/cultural studies and 2) theoretical/applied linguistics. The existence of nine tracks gave the false impression that a student could become a specialist in that area upon completion of the M.A. degree. The APC also worried whether students would receive adequate advising in so many tracks. Faculty broadly agreed that the M.A. degree is best conceived as a generalist, rather than a specialist, degree. The two tracks of the current program reflect the broader professional division within language studies in the academy.

2. The second recommendation was to *adopt a required core of courses that would provide students with foundational knowledge and help to create a sense of community among the graduate students*. This recommendation was viewed as important in part because the program had graduate students in different languages. Although the new program that will take effect in May 2022 will be an M.A. in Spanish, the program has retained the core courses requirement. In fact, the new core will be four courses instead of the previous three:

1. LAN 405 Introduction to Cultural Studies
2. LAN 475 Foreign Language Teaching Methodologies or 480 Topics in Foreign Language Instruction
3. LAN 485 Selected Studies in Linguistics
4. LAN 490 Topics in Literary Studies

The new core will require students to take two courses in each of the areas of emphasis in the new program: theoretical/applied linguistics and literary/cultural studies. Moreover, other than LAN 475 and 480, which will continue to be taught in English, as English is the language of preference in the discipline in the U.S., the other three core courses will be taught in Spanish, which will help students continue to develop their Spanish language skills.

3. The third recommendation asked us to *clarify student learning outcomes*, which the faculty did. The faculty also linked the outcomes more coherently to the assessment plan. As the May 31, 2016 follow-up report to the previous program review indicates, program faculty responded to the APC's recommendation to the previous program review by adopting five student learning outcomes. Students who graduate from the program will have the ability to:

1. analyze, interpret, and evaluate cultural/literary texts/artifacts critically and in accord with disciplinary standards
2. apply knowledge of the linguistic system and history of the language to understand the morphology, phonology, semantics, syntax and/or pragmatics of the target language
3. apply second language theory and principles in the teaching of foreign languages
4. conduct original and/or empirical research on cultural/literary/linguistic topics
5. state and defend arguments in the target language and in accord with disciplinary standards

The program adopted a Course Assessment Report to track how student learning outcomes map onto graduate courses. After each semester, faculty submit to the graduate coordinator a Course Assessment Report for every graduate course they taught that semester. Students demonstrate these learning outcomes through a number of direct methods: research projects, examinations, presentations, portfolios, etc. The program developed a curriculum map that shows how the student learning outcomes map onto the graduate courses. Assessment data gathered for the review period indicate that courses continue to be linked closely to our program learning outcomes. In addition, the faculty made the thesis a realistic option in 2016 in order to provide students an additional means to achieve the program's learning outcomes. The program's learning outcomes now undergird all program requirements.

Major findings

1. Many faculty believe the program already had many positive elements. The revised program reflects important improvements, but the foundation was sound, as attested to by the success of students in the program and their continued successes after they graduate.
2. The consolidation of the advising tracks and the creation of a core of courses were recommendations from the previous program review that faculty found valuable. The revised program retains both features.
3. As evidence by the revisions to the program, faculty regularly take stock of the program as they look for ways to improve it and better serve the students. The creation of a third exit option for the program reflects the faculty's sensitivity to questions of equity among all the program's constituents. Creating a more robust core of courses to be offered in Spanish instead of English and no longer requiring the M.A. exam of all students, which frees up students to write a thesis, all strengthen the connection between program requirements and specific student learning outcomes.
4. The elimination of the Salamanca (USAL) exchange program laid bare a certain realpolitik within university administration. Whatever the university's stated goals vis-à-vis internationalization, such goals face numerous constraints. Unfortunately, the USAL program was not deemed a high enough priority to receive university support.
5. Very few programs offer a single M.A. degree with multiple language concentrations/tracks. By revising the program to an M.A. in Spanish, the program align itself with what is common practice in our fields. Faculty are hopeful that the program will be more visible to potential applicants as a result. Those who search for "Spanish graduate program programs" will no longer potentially overlook the program simply because of its name.

Initiatives and plans

1. The most significant initiative is to implement and track the success of the new M.A. program as detailed above.
2. Faculty are interested in increasing and broadening the provenance of international applications and improving recruitment efforts among juniors and seniors.
3. Faculty recognize the challenges of maintaining relations with and tracking program alumni. The faculty will seek ways to do this more effectively.
4. Despite the fact that 1) less than a third of college graduates work in a field related to their degree, 2) college graduates on average change jobs four times in the first decade after graduation, and 3) college graduates can expect to change jobs 12 times over their lifetime, the idea that college is primarily concerned with vocational training looms large in the minds of students. Faculty will continue to promote the value of transferrable 'soft' skills, which have been identified as the most valuable benefit of college. At the same time, we see an opportunity to offer more concerted advising about career options.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures program in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-report were accomplished during the time period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders including from an alumni advisory board.

The committee notes that the program's enrollment during the period covering the program review cycle has stayed relatively constant (with a drop in 2020, but a bounce back in 2021), but is below the stated target of 30 students. We commend the program faculty for their work to substantially redesign the program in response to the changes to the discipline, and state and national contexts. The committee commends the Department faculty for efforts to increase the gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students. The number of men and women in the program is consistently balanced over the period of review (since 2017, the percentage of students identifying as women has ranged from 45 percent to 65 percent). The percentage of graduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has decreased over the review period (from 38 percent in 2017 to 27 percent in 2020) during the period of review. The committee notes that the program primarily draws from three populations: Illinois State University undergraduates, international students, and secondary education professionals from the surrounding areas. Many students are awarded graduate assistantships and teach introductory undergraduate language courses. The committee commends the program faculty for their strong support of graduate student teaching (e.g., the Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation, the mentoring program, required LAN 475 Foreign Language Teaching Methodologies course, and structured assessment processes).

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their students. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses following best practice guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL). This practice is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. The committee notes that the program provides its graduate students the opportunity to participate in the same activities afforded to undergraduate students which allows them to learn from experts in the field, network with potential employers, and improve their language skills (e.g., events and activities hosted by the national honors societies, and the Spanish and French clubs). The self-study report provides examples of some of the opportunities for student participation in research opportunities, including co-authored conference presentations. These varied opportunities help the program prepare students for employment and build a strong student community in the program.

The committee commend the faculty for their substantial work to revise the curriculum during the period of review based on changes to the discipline, feedback from multiple stakeholders, and anticipated state and national needs. The largest example of this is the restructuring of the program to become an M.A. in Spanish. These revisions included the removal of the French track, the development of three exit options (thesis, comprehensive exam, or additional coursework), and four core courses in Spanish (covering literary studies, cultural studies, theoretical linguistics, and applied linguistics). Additionally, the program faculty have developed new 400-level courses (graduate) corresponding to existing 300-level courses (undergraduate). The new curriculum is designed to help students develop competency (academic reading, writing, research, and oral presentation) in the areas of (1) theoretical and applied linguistics and (2) literary and cultural studies. Furthermore, the program faculty are commended for their work to infuse issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the program curriculum.

The committee notes that the program faculty continue to revise and implement their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. During the current review cycle, faculty have used the evidence gathered through the student learning outcomes assessment plan to inform program changes.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journals articles, and present at national and international professional conferences. Additionally, we recognize that every faculty in the program has been actively involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom.

The committee appreciates the analysis of comparator and aspirational programs. It was clear to the committee that the revisions to the program was informed by examining multiple institutions, both within the state and nationally. We commend the faculty for developing and implementing specific action plans to improve the program at Illinois State University.

The committee commends the program faculty for being accredited by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Furthermore, we also commend the program faculty for maintaining program standards that allow students to meet state language requirements for teaching at community colleges.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures for the opportunity to provide input regarding the M.A. in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with department faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for controlled enrollment growth. The committee notes that demand for the program has been strong, resulting in relatively steady enrollments. The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed to revise the program to increase enrollments to address state and national needs. In light of the substantial revisions of the program structure, we recommend that the program faculty revisit their recruiting and enrollment plans.

Continue to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. While the committee recognizes the efforts to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of faculty and students within the program, the committee encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates. The committee encourages the program to continue developing opportunities for student research and creative activities as well as graduate student focused co-curricular opportunities.

Continue to review and revise the curriculum. The committee recognizes substantial work by faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. In light of the substantial revisions of the curriculum, the committee strongly recommends continued periodic review of the impact of these changes (e.g., new sequences, reduction of required hours) and to ensure that the content remains current with changes in the field. We also recommend that the program faculty examine the impact of having the early language courses taught by graduate students on the oral proficiency issues of undergraduate students enrolled in those courses. The committee encourages the program to continue developing opportunities for student research and creative activities. We strongly recommend that the program faculty continue to explore avenues for the diffusion of equity, diversity, and inclusion issues into the program’s curriculum.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. We strongly recommend that the

program faculty collaborate with University Assessment Services to improve the linkage between the objectives and the tools used to measure those objectives across the curriculum. Of particular focus should be examining the impact of the new curricular structures that have been recently developed are now in operation. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to accountancy to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the Department and the Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the Department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue to refine a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni (not only department-wide, but also specifically at the graduate program level) and use this system to enhance alumni networking and engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and providing employment opportunities for program graduates.