Teagle Assessment Report: French and Francophone Studies
(updated 10/29/14 from 4/21/14)

The Department of French and Francophone Studies (BMC) has identified and continues to work on two main areas of assessment:

I. The language proficiency (oral and written) of entering students and students of the Intensive and Regular language tracks whom we evaluate by the Placement and Proficiency tests we have created, accessible on Moodle, each containing an oral and written component.

Current practice:
The Moodle site is available to all entering first-year and transfer students, and we can enroll, in fact, any student who wants to take the exams to evaluate her progress, e.g., after a semester or a summer of study in a Francophone country.
The oral and written French Placement exams are usually taken over the summer and, depending on the scores achieved, students are often asked to write a supplementary essay to finetune their placement. Usually 20-30% of the students are asked to do this additional writing assignment that is evaluated by a faculty member before August 10 so that students may register for the appropriate course.

The Proficiency test (written), also on Moodle, is administered at the end of the AY in Regular Elementary (both at BMC and HC) and Intensive Elementary (BMC). Oral assessment is done through Oral Proficiency Interviews, which are administered by a certified tester brought to campus for this purpose, either at the end of semester I (Intensive Intermediate 005) or at the end of the AY (Regular and Intensive Elementary). In the intensive track, students are asked to fill out “in-house” course evaluations and evaluations of the undergraduate T.A.s so that we may best evaluate what is working, what needs tweaking, etc. These written and oral assessments are intended to help us determine how much more students taking the Intensive Elementary track learn compared to their peers in the Regular track. We have results going back over fifteen years of testing that demonstrate the desirability of retaining the Intensive track (5 semesters of French covered in 3) for students intending to minor, major, or to acquire fluency for their post-college careers and plans. N.B. These results have been important in

• obtaining outside funding (at the initiation of the Intensive track)
• convincing the Provost that the extra expense involved (training, overseeing and paying the undergraduate T.A.’s that teach three extra hours of drills) is worth it
• showing students the outcomes they can expect to achieve in both the regular and intensive tracks

These assessment are a service we provide to all students, regardless of their intention to pursue the study of French.

Future plans:
This fall, we discussed the desirability of administering the Proficiency test (written) at the end of the two semesters of Regular Intermediate, the one semester of Intensive Intermediate and to graduates of this latter course who then take the sixth-semester courses 102 or 105. The purpose of such additional assessment would be for internal use, i.e., to continue our study of the efficacy of the intensive track vs. the regular track. This is an important goal, for example, when we consider that Italian and Spanish have dropped their intensive programs; Spanish, which receives support for more sections of the first three years of study, can offer sections of 2nd and 4th semesters in the first semester of the AY. It is important for us to see whether, with more adjunct funding (not what the Provost wants for justifiable reasons) we could obtain the same results or, conversely, whether our offering of the two tracks achieves better academic results with less expense. Usually, 20-33% of our senior majors come from the Intensive track. It would be interesting to compare those results with Spanish.

We also are including an important assessment piece in our current request for a 2nd Continuing Non-tenure track faculty member to CAP. We are asking that either the new hire (if approved) or the CNTT faculty member responsible for the Intensive track be enrolled, at College expense, in the ACTFL Oral Proficiency training program. We do so, mindful of the importance of having an in-house certified tester, who could do all the Oral Proficiency testing mentioned above, as well as administer the missing piece of oral assessment to the program mentioned above, i.e., test graduates of the regular intermediate sequence at the end of the AY. The expense of bringing in an outside certified tester is not negligible (annually, between $2500-3000) and outweighs the investment the College would make in having one of our own faculty certified and paying her/him an appropriate stipend for the extra work involved (part of which would be considered one of the responsibilities of the CNTT position).

II. The other substantial assessment activity focuses on a smaller and more self-selected group: our majors (and, to some extent, our minors and students interested in acquiring linguistic and cultural proficiency).
This is a work-in-progress, as can be illustrated by the fact that the Moodle site we created has not yet been filled as completely as it will be in the future. The vacation in January will be the next likely time for those of us who have comments to do so (after turning in semester I grades).

Organization of the assessment (Current): The site is built on a portfolio principle, with folders established for each student major within her class year. Each professor

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1 American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language
who has a student in her/his class(es) over the year places a document assessing the student’s progress in the course, according to the following rubrics:

1) Language Assessment
   - Fluency of spoken French (using the ACTFL OPI Proficiency scale: Intermediate -/+; Advanced -/+, Superior -/+, Near-Native:). This evaluation will pick up where the previous assessment system left off.
   - Fluency and accuracy of written French

2) Critical Writing Assessment
   - Ability to produce a vibrant thesis and to sustain a complex, original, and coherent argument based on a primary text (conceived broadly)
   - Ability to use and cite primary sources effectively both stylistically and rhetorically
   - Ability to find, use and effectively cite secondary sources
   - Ability to constitute and employ an extensive bibliography. (Location of key texts in the field, good distribution of theoretical texts, texts applicable to the broad field determined by the writer, and critical works specific to the object being analyzed, and annotation of each work being used).

Implementation (Current):
We have realized that the structure we set up of assigning each student a folder allows us to enter not only our assessment of their coursework (ongoing) but also any recommendations that we write over the course of their study with us; these give an excellent photo of their progress over time and additionally allow colleagues who have not taught a student to familiarize her/himself with the student’s profile.

In cases where the student has submitted an essay to a public prize competition, we can upload them with their consent:

Editing privileges are given to faculty of both BMC and HC French departments, since our curriculum is joint.

Future Plans

If the College agrees to underwrite the training and certification of either the new CNTT hire (if search approved for 2015-16) or the CNTT professor of the intensive track as an ACTFL OPI tester, the possibility for oral assessments of our students at the 200- (and even 300- levels?) is significantly enhanced. It would be logical, for example, to add an Oral Proficiency Interview to the end of the advanced language course (212 at HC or 260 at BMC), to evaluate students’ oral fluency, since each course emphasizes both speaking and writing but usually accords more weight in grading to the written component. Such a “mid-program” assessment would allow

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2 Financially, it would make sense for BMC to underwrite such certification of one faculty member, since it has already shelled out the equivalent of $25,000-30,000 over the long period we have used the services of the outside OPI tester.

3 If HC colleagues agree
students to see what they have already accomplished (outcomes) and what they need to work on for their future success in the oral defense (at the end of senior year) of their thesis or senior essay. We had hoped, as I presented last year, to add an oral assessment to the junior writing-intensive seminar we talked about incorporating in our curriculum. Unfortunately, our presentation of the junior seminar idea to HC colleagues at the end of last year failed to persuade them of its usefulness or validity. We have, therefore, dropped that idea since we offer a joint curriculum.

We have discussed and wish to continue discussing the addition to the Moodle site of a space for faculty to assess their courses, with attention to what was successful and what was not. N.B. this is an ongoing discussion and by no means decided. Colleagues brought up privacy concerns both with respect to our own assessments and to the student papers uploaded (with their consent, in which case, the privacy issue no longer pertains). Some colleagues are not convinced that this is the right place to engage in such introspection and believe that a more appropriate forum is the self-assessment we, as faculty, hand to the Provost and CA at the time of renewal, promotion, tenuring, full professor reviews, etc. For the moment, participation in this part of the assessment process is voluntary.

It was suggested in an in-house Teagle update meeting last spring that we might want to ask students to assess their progress in short documents that we could then upload to the individual student’s folder. This is a subject we raised for comment from seniors at the end-of term social gathering in May 2014. We hope to meet with current seniors at the end of sem I/beginning of sem II ’14-15 to hear their thoughts about evaluating their own progress and perhaps giving consent to uploading the best essay from a particular course.

Respectfully submitted for the department,

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