

UNDERGRADUATE***

Department of Modern Languages / Kansas State University Identifying and Assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

I. Introduction. Student Learning Outcomes in programs of the Department of Modern Languages are listed in the six categories that are used university-wide in efforts to assess student output and program effectiveness. The categories are as follows: **Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Communication, Diversity, Ownership for Learning, and Personal and Professional Development**

Learning a foreign language implies the acquisition of *detailed knowledge* of the target culture as well as the comprehension of the language and its literature. Such knowledge encompasses purely technical knowledge of the target language as well as insights into modes of thinking other than those students already have. Studying a foreign language will stimulate the student's *critical thinking* about the linguistic structure of that language as well as its literature, all within a cultural context that implies a range of paradigms. Critical thinking goes beyond the mere technical understanding of a text and the ability to summarize it. It also implies the ability to interpret texts and the development of an understanding of the target culture. Therefore, it extends into many disciplines across the social sciences, the humanities, and cross-cultural studies. Students develop and improve *communication skills* not only in the target language, but through exposure to another linguistic system, and ultimately also in their mother tongue. Our classes stimulates students to develop the ability to relate to *diverse cultures* and thus reflect on their own. A foreign language, once started, often has the impact of turning students into *life-long learners*. In that sense it is like a savings account that keeps growing once the initial investment is made. The longer a student stays with the chosen language, especially after an extended sojourn in one of the countries in which it is spoken, the less the student may be inclined to give up on studying this language and its culture. Language learning engages in a multitude of exercises and experiences in which students learn to interact with their peers and learn how to *work as a team*, an ability that is highly sought by government and industry employers. Learning to do research cultivates individual responsibility and reinforces personal ethics. The knowledge of another culture through its language and texts enhances social responsibility as well as cosmopolitan and even global thinking. Consequently, the study of a foreign culture and its language has the potential to turn students into more *responsible citizens* of the world. Students with four years of language training and a year abroad clearly demonstrate this *development* from local thinkers into more cosmopolitan thinkers.

Note: References to "advanced" and "superior" skills in reading, speaking, and writing are to definitions and guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). References are made in this document to Attachment A (*advanced) and Attachment B (**superior).

II. Student Learning Outcomes by Assessment Category

A. Bachelor of Arts Modern Languages

Graduates in Modern Languages will have demonstrated:

Assessment Categories

01. The ability to read primary texts in their

target language for general comprehension

02. The ability to interpret primary texts in their target language literatures and cultural context	knowledge, critical thinking, diversity
03. The ability to investigate, evaluate, and apply secondary sources of information in research and problem-solving activities	knowledge, critical thinking, ownership for learning, personal and professional development
04. Advanced* level skill in speaking according to recognized professional guidelines	knowledge, critical thinking, communication
05. Advanced* level skill in reading according to recognized professional guidelines	knowledge, critical thinking, communication
06. Advanced* level skill in writing according to recognized professional guidelines	knowledge, critical thinking, communication
07. The ability to articulate differences and similarities between target language cultures and cultures in the United States	critical thinking, communication, diversity
08. The ability to work effectively in multi-ethnic and multilingual environments	diversity, communication, personal and professional development, critical thinking
09. Knowledge of professional opportunities for those with bilingual or multilingual skills	ownership for learning; personal and professional development

III. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Methods

A. Bachelor of Arts Modern Languages

Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment Mode

01. The ability to read primary texts in their target language for general comprehension	student portfolio
02. The ability to interpret primary texts in their target language literatures and cultures	term papers; student portfolio
03. The ability to investigate, evaluate, and apply secondary sources of information in research and problem-solving activities	term papers; student portfolio
04. Advanced* level skill in speaking according to recognized professional guidelines	OPI or SOPI (ACTFL guidelines)
05. Advanced* level skill in reading according to	recognized professional guidelines

06. Advanced* level skill in writing according to recognized professional guidelines

student portfolio

07. The ability to articulate differences and similarities between target language cultures and cultures in the United States

study abroad; student portfolio; culture component of curriculum

08. The ability to work effectively a multi-ethnic and multilingual environments

group work in class; study abroad; conversation classes

09. Knowledge of professional opportunities for those with bilingual or multilingual skills

advising; activity clubs; semi-annual meeting sponsored by department for majors/minors

Department of Modern Languages / Kansas State University
Identifying and Assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
Attachments

Attachment A: Bachelor of Arts Degree

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: Advanced

The following guidelines of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages are used nationally to identify proficiency levels in foreign language skills.

1. Speaking

Able to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine school and work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining, and apologizing. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings can often be smoothed over by communicative strategies, such as pause fillers, stalling devices, and different rates of speech. Circumlocution which arises from vocabulary or syntactic limitations very often is quite successful, though some groping for words may still be evident. The Advanced-level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors.

2. Reading

Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader.

3. Writing

Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express self simply with some circumlocution. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols. Good control of the morphology and the most frequently used syntactic structures, e.g., common word order patterns, coordination, subordination, but makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately. Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging. Writing is understandable to natives not used to the writing of non-natives.