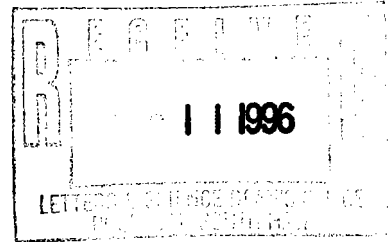


UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES  
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December 9, 1996

Memo to: Dean Alex Nagel  
From: Linda Hunter  
Subject: Assessment Plan *LH*

Attached please find the Assessment Plan for the Graduate Program of the Department of African Languages and Literature.



**Department of African Languages and Literature**

**Plan for Assessment  
of the Graduate Program**

**December, 1996**

## **Introduction**

The Department of African Languages and Literature is the only one in this country, one of the few outside of Africa. The Department was created in 1964 with a faculty of two. The faculty now numbers 8.25.

This assessment plan focuses on the Graduate Program of the Department of African Languages and Literature. The Department plans to review the Undergraduate Program in its entirety during the 1996-1997 academic year. At present the Undergraduate Program consists of 6 students. Among the issues to be reviewed are the size of the program, the curriculum, the honors curriculum, the interface between the undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Graduate Program was reviewed as part of a Departmental Internal Review conducted during the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 academic years. Some of the assessment methods described below are a result of that review.

## **The Mission of the Department**

The mission of the Department of African Languages and Literature is to provide research and teaching in the areas of African languages, linguistics, literature, and oral tradition. This includes work on both graduate and undergraduate levels, and emphasizes the development and application of analytical and methodological tools that will enable students to work effectively and imaginatively in the four areas.

The four areas are not considered mutually exclusive: the interconnections of these disciplines are studied closely and creatively. It is in the linkages among the disciplines that the Department makes its most significant and original contributions to knowledge.

The Department's mission is also to produce graduate students who are capable of conducting original research and of providing teaching of quality in African languages, linguistics, oral traditions, and literature; students who will assure the future strength and health of these fields, who will carry our work to other institutions and countries. Through our teaching and our publications, we regularly inform and define, develop and give richness to our several disciplines, and so have a shaping influence on the field generally.

As importantly, we seek to have an impact on the larger university community and beyond by our work with undergraduate students, as we cultivate their interests, give depth and breadth to their education, eliminate ruinous stereotypes, and foster understanding.

## **Educational Goals**

The Mission Statement specifies the educational goals for the graduate program: to produce students who are capable of conducting original research and of providing teaching of

quality in African languages, linguistics, oral traditions, and literature.

### **Assessment Methods**

- Entrance Assessment

Students who enter the Department with previous language work are assessed by means of standardized tests to determine placement.

Students who enter the Department with an M.A. thesis have that thesis assessed by the Admissions Committee.

- M.A. thesis evaluation

The M.A. thesis proposal is evaluated by the entire Departmental faculty. The thesis itself is examined by a committee of three, often with the additional of a fourth member from outside the Department.

Two prize competitions are available for theses of exceptional quality: The African Studies Program Jordan Prize Award and the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools Distinguished Master's Thesis Award. The judges for each of these competitions are from outside the Department.

- Student Colloquia

Graduate students present work once a month at a student colloquium series attended by graduate students, undergraduate majors, faculty and visitors from other departments.

- Conference Papers

Graduate students are encouraged to submit proposals for presenting papers at conferences such as the yearly meetings of the African Literature Association and the Annual Conference on African Linguistics.

- Language Assessment

Five members of the Department faculty teach languages on a regular basis. All five have had training in proficiency based methods of teaching and assessment. Three are currently members of task forces organized by the African Language Teachers Association which aim to set national standards for proficiency in African languages. Language assessment is therefore a regular and ongoing part of the Graduate program. As a result of the internal review the Department has developed a course in Language Teaching Pedagogy. This course provides a means of assessing teaching as well as language skills.

- Preliminary Examinations

Graduate students sit for preliminary examinations in three areas: Literature (or linguistics) major exam, literature (or linguistics) minor exam, area of specialization. Examinations are evaluated by all members of the faculty.

- Ph.D. Proposal Assessment

The Ph.D. proposal is evaluated in an oral examination by a committee of three faculty members. Proposals are generally subjected to outside assessment as well when they are submitted to granting agencies such as Fulbright for funding for field work.

- Ph.D. Dissertation

The Ph.D. dissertation is evaluated by a committee of five, typically with three members from the Department and two from outside.

- Scholarly Activities Reports

The Department plans to begin requesting a Scholarly Activities Report from each graduate student.

- Alumni Surveys

The Department has begun to send alumni a yearly letter from the Chair. In conjunction with this letter, the Department plans to begin conducting follow-up surveys five years after degree.

## **Implementation**

Assessment data for each graduate student are collected and compiled by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair with the assistance of the Program Assistant. These data are presented once a year at a Departmental meeting usually in early Spring.