

1 May 2006

Dean Gary Sandefur
College of Letters & Science
South Hall
Campus

Dear Gary,

Enclosed please find the Assessment Plans of the Department of French & Italian, one for the French program, the other for the Italian program. The French program assessment plan includes five appendices.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Aliko Songolo
Professor and Chair

Revised Assessment Plan, Spring 2006: French programs

A. Undergraduate Major in French

1. Goals of the program

The teaching mission of the undergraduate French program is to provide instruction in the areas of French and francophone literature, culture and civilization, theater production, film, painting, literary history, criticism and theory, methods of research and methods of teaching language and literature. To this end, the program strives to impart the critical techniques and tools that are necessary to achieve, among others, the following goals:

- Close reading of texts
- Application of linguistic and cultural analyses to human as well as textual problems
- Articulation of theories and methods
- Drawing connections between words, texts, traditions, and cultures
- Constructing coherent oral and written arguments and developing communications strategies

For undergraduates who want to do considerable work in French, there are two majors: the “regular” French major, and a teaching major in the School of Education (for this option a minor in French is also available). The “regular” French major contributes in a significant way to the education of those who plan a career in academia, foreign service, editorial work, translating, interpreting, and many other professional and commercial fields. The teaching major prepares students to teach French in elementary, middle, junior high, or high school.

2. Assessment Overview

The Department intends to assess the undergraduate major in French in four ways: 1) through a collective revision of the undergraduate curriculum; 2) by an ongoing evaluation by the Undergraduate Studies Committee of a sampling of papers written for courses, with discussion in the UGS Committee of the significance of evaluation findings for pedagogical and grading policies; 3) by instituting a requirement for language study at the 300 level or above; and 4) by a questionnaire that will be given to majors to fill out at our informational gathering for majors, the “majors’ fête.” Some of these activities have been ongoing since 2004, notably the revision of the undergraduate curriculum, and the others are being planned in the Spring of 2006.

3. Revision of the Undergraduate Curriculum

The French undergraduate major traditionally has been a high-functioning program, as measured by 1) continuing strong numbers of majors (see appendix 1) despite declining

numbers of faculty and despite a national trend toward the dramatic shrinkage of numbers of French majors; and 2) by the consistent high national and international ranking of the French program at UW-Madison, as indicated in the most recent Department of French and Italian Self-Study Report and the Report of the Committee Appointed to Review the Department of French and Italian. However, periodic assessment and updating of curricular structures are needed in any program, for reasons as simple as the adjustment of course titles to reflect evolving academic terminology, and as complex as the need, in a postcolonial era, to incorporate more extra-continental francophone materials in diverse areas of the curriculum. Therefore in 2004 the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the entire faculty and academic staff of French and Italian, embarked on a revision of the undergraduate curriculum.

By the end of the Spring of 2005, a curriculum revision document had been approved by French and Italian (see appendix 2). In January 2006, administrative forms for the curriculum revision had been submitted to L&S. (This packet is too large to include as an appendix.) In March of 2006, L&S completed a technical review of the curriculum revision. Responses to the Technical Review are being forwarded to L&S and attached to the existing proposal. On March 27 2006, L&S approved the revision in principle pending final corrections and responses.

4. Evaluation of Undergraduate Papers

The Undergraduate Studies Committee asked instructors in approximately 5 courses, chosen to be representative of the different aspects of the major (language, literature, civilization), submit a paper representing median work in the class and an evaluation of that work to the UGS Committee. The Undergraduate Studies Committee will assess these student papers and instructor evaluations in light of 1) the success of current French pedagogical methods in language training, both in the intermediate/advanced sequence required within the major and in the courses leading up to the major (with the caveat that many of our students take these courses in high school); 2) the ways in which we train students in the analysis of literature and culture; 3) the fairness and departmental uniformity of grading policies; and 4) initiatives to improve median student achievement.

5. Requirement for Language Study at the 300-Level or Above

Previous assessments indicated common (though certainly not universal) deficiencies in writing and speaking among our majors at an advanced level relative to our high expectations, which are based on such guidelines as those published by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Part of the Curriculum Revision addressed this problem through the institution of a new requirement for 3 credits of language study at the 300-level or above. Instructors will assess students' oral and written skills through testing, essay-writing, and verbal presentations, and will report on results to the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

6. Undergraduate Questionnaire

We decided to administer a questionnaire (see appendix 3) in order to assess students' experience as French majors, as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the organization of the program, during our annual Majors' fête/festa, an informational and celebratory meeting for our majors. Students were requested to fill out the questionnaires anonymously and return them at the end of the meeting or at a later point to the departmental office. These questionnaires have been collected. The Undergraduate Studies Committee will read and assess the results and use them to consider modifications in the major. The department will investigate the possibility of transferring the questionnaire to a DoIT WebSurvey in the future.

B. Graduate Program in French

1. Goals of the program

Students undertaking graduate studies in French are expected to acquire a critical understanding of the major works in literature and the history of ideas that have been written in French from the Middle Ages up to the present. This includes works written in francophone countries outside metropolitan France. The students are also required to demonstrate, in the writing of their Ph.D. dissertation, an originality of thinking and thorough understanding of the historical and social contexts that have influenced the works examined in their dissertation. As part of earning a Ph.D. in our program, students must also achieve an excellent level of proficiency in spoken and written French. Finally, they must have learned the fundamentals needed to become effective teachers of French at the college level. Our department strives to help students achieve those goals and complete their degrees within the time frame deemed suitable by the Graduate School, and to provide them with adequate financial support through most of their graduate careers.

2. How current assessment is conducted

Within the requirements for both the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees are a set of exams and courses of training that each student must satisfy in order to demonstrate proficiency in the French language, his or her skills as a teacher of the French language, and his or her knowledge of French and Francophone literature and culture. Non-native speakers of French must prove proficiency in the writing and speaking of the language; the latter is assessed through tools such as the Oral Proficiency Interview, which adheres to the standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and is administered during each student's first semester in the program. Teaching skills are evaluated both through required course work in teaching methodology and through practical teacher training, part of which involves visits to the classes taught by the student, made by faculty, senior members of our academic staff, and head teaching assistants. Such visits, along with close cooperation with faculty and academic staff

members in the design and implementation of the curricula that the student teaches, continue throughout his or her contract as a teaching assistant. Twice a year, at the end of each semester, the French and Italian TA Review Committee convenes to review every teaching assistant's student evaluations and remedy any problem that may be evident therein.

The three main assessments of our students' achievement in the area of academic knowledge (beyond their performance in individual graduate courses and seminars) are the M.A. exam, the doctoral preliminary exams, and the Ph.D. dissertation defense, all described below.

In order to pass the M.A. exam, which is made up of a five-hour written exam and a one-hour oral exam, students must demonstrate a familiarity with the major works of French and francophone literature from the Middle Ages to the present. They must be able to analyze some of these works in detail, and discuss their literary and historical importance. The written exam is done in French (with the exception of one optional question that may be written in English), and the oral exam is conducted completely in French, which allows successful candidates to also demonstrate that they have mastered the French language sufficiently to lead a well-informed discussion of literature and culture. Students who enter the graduate program with an M.A. in French from another university are required to take a qualifying examination similar to the oral part of the M.A. examination.

Three written preliminary exams are required of our Ph.D. students before they undertake their dissertation. For formal admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree in French, a student must take two "area" prelims, chosen among the seven areas in our program (the medieval period, five centuries, and francophonie), and one "special topic prelim" that helps students select a dissertation topic. On these exams students must show familiarity with the development of French and francophone literature and civilization; a first-hand acquaintance with the major texts; and an ability to analyze and interpret texts in a persuasive and coherent way.

Assessment of progress on the dissertation is conducted by each of the three readers, who communicate regularly to share their impressions. The Ph.D. dissertation defense is an in-depth oral exam in which the student must support or clarify arguments that are advanced in his or her dissertation. Since the dissertation is on a specific problem of literary interpretation or literary history, and since all dissertators have already had to pass rigorous exams in the areas of specialization covered by their dissertation, the assessment that takes place at the Ph.D. defense is of a detailed nature. The student is required to demonstrate an originality of thinking along with an understanding of the historical and social contexts that influence the literary works under scrutiny. The combination of testing the students' breadth of knowledge at the M.A. level and the depth and originality of understanding at the Ph.D. level means that students graduating with a Ph.D. in French are specialist researchers who can apply their investigative skills to a variety of fields within French-speaking literature and cultures.

3. Additional assessment tools used since 1997-98

In addition to the direct indicators of a student's performance in our program, listed above, the department added two indirect indicators in 1997-98 to help assess our graduate program in French.

The first of these is an exit survey that we ask graduating Ph.D.s, and also graduating M.A.s who are not continuing in our program, to complete. The department has so far sent 60 copies of this survey to Ph.D. and M.A. recipients who received their degrees from January 1990 to the present. The questionnaire asks the alumni/ae to respond to six questions:

1. How did your graduate training in French prepare you overall for your academic career?
-- respondents are asked to circle one of 5 options: a. extremely well; b. very well in parts; c. adequately; d. not very well in parts; e. not well.
2. How well did the breadth of your training in literature prepare you for your current work?
3. Has your instruction in research techniques and scholarly writing helped you sufficiently in your scholarly writing or conference papers?
4. To what extent has your training as a T.A. helped you in your current teaching?
5. Are there particular areas of your training in Madison that you believe helped you gain an academic position?
6. In which areas would you have liked to have more training, in preparation for your career?

The second indicator of assessment that we use periodically is a survey of the graduate students currently enrolled in our M.A. and Ph.D. programs. This survey is composed and administered by the Graduate Association of French and Italian Students (GAFIS), who report the results of the survey to the Graduate Studies committee meeting. The most recent survey was distributed in November 2005. It asked students to evaluate aspects of their coursework, their teaching, faculty advising, student finances, departmental administration, and other concerns that the students wanted addressed. After reading the results of the GAFIS survey, the Graduate Studies committee put on its agenda for forthcoming meetings in Spring 2006, a discussion of such questions as how to improve the faculty advising system, and how to enhance students' training in writing conference papers.

Both of these assessment indicators have already helped our Graduate Studies committee adapt and improve aspects of our program in the light of students' feedback. That effort is in line with the project recently suggested by our new Graduate Coordinator, Andrea Palm, to review our "Graduate Requirements" document in order to clarify certain procedures (exams, advising, pedagogy requirements) that have created uncertainty among some of our students [a copy of this document is attached; see appendix 4]. The revised version of that document should be ready by Fall 2006.

Although both of these indicators lead us to believe that students in the French graduate program are generally satisfied with the quality of their training, they also make it clear that our students consider their salary compensation as TAs to be inadequate, especially in relation to the cost of living in Madison. It is worth noting, in this regard, that some of our TAs on guaranteed support are obliged by financial pressures to find supplemental work beyond the teaching load specified in their contract in order to pursue their studies—a situation that often hampers their academic progress. For instance, several students are unable to avail themselves of study or research opportunities abroad because of the need to pay off debts by working in Madison.

4. Policy recommendations

The main goal of our graduate program in French is to give our students the most rigorous training possible so that they can secure teaching and research positions in universities throughout the country. In addition to fine-tuning the indicators that we already use to assess our program's success in achieving this goal, we are developing new tools to monitor student progress through the program--most particularly at the dissertator level--and to assess our capacity to provide financial support for our graduate students.

a) Student progress: One proposed way to measure student progress (and, perhaps, help students achieve the aim of completing their degrees in a timely manner) is to have each dissertator file a yearly report in which s/he evaluates his/her own progress and charts a time line for the following year.

b) Capacity to provide financial support: The department would welcome a renewed dialogue with the administration regarding graduate student subsidies, to explore ways of making our TA stipends more commensurate with those awarded by French programs at peer institutions (according to a recent CIC survey prepared by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Ohio State University, our typical annual stipend for first-year French TAs in 2005 was between \$2259 and \$6217 lower than that offered by other CIC Romance Language Members, for the same course load). We plan to investigate several options, including the one recently announced by the administration of offering guarantees of five years of support, rather than the traditional four years, for students who come to the University of Wisconsin to complete both an MA and a PhD in French. Given that such a change would have major ramifications for our TA budget, graduate course enrollments, and recruitment for the graduate program, we would undertake it only after careful consideration. We would also welcome the chance to participate in a campus-wide discussion of the percentage at which TAs in humanities departments are currently hired, a figure that is low relative to what is granted to TAs and RAs in the sciences.

C. Professional French Masters Program and Capstone Certificate of Professional French Studies Program

1. Goals of the program

The Professional French Masters Program equips its students to use the French language regularly in their professional fields, at a level appropriate to successful interaction with native-speaking stakeholders commonly found in organizations hiring full-time in those fields internationally and in professional environments where fluent French is required or extremely beneficial. The Capstone Certificate of Professional French Studies program—a professional development program administered by the PFMP and requiring some of the same core courses but not leading to a graduate degree—has the same mission, but for those for whom a graduate credential is less necessary in their professional lives.

Major learning goals for PFMP and Certificate students are: (1) familiarity with major social, political, cultural and economic developments in francophone regions of the world; (2) developed cross-cultural analytical tools applicable in the international workplace; (3) masterful understanding of current developments in the student's professional field; (4) advanced proficiency in French in the context of the student's professional field; (5) a marketable overall skills set that prioritizes communication, research and planning, human relations, and organization skills.

2. How current assessment is conducted *(Learning goals 1-5 addressed by these strategies are in parentheses where applicable.)*

Students in both programs complete core coursework in French, including research methods (2,3,4,5); Francophone culture and society (1,2); advanced grammar and style (2,3,4,5); professional oral communication (2,3,4,5) and a specialized language tutorial for which the program hires qualified French exchange students in business to work individually with each of our student for two hours a week (4). They also do required concentration-area coursework outside the Department (3), and are advised by advisors working outside the Department, in areas related to the student's field (3). The PFMP Executive Director also advises every student directly, in concert with advisors in the student's concentration area, and helps each student find and work with a thesis advisor (3,4). All students do a professional internship in a Francophone country, located by a consultant in France who finds each student an internship based on his or her skills (1-5). Students submit a 10-page internship report, which they write in French and include in their professional portfolio at the end of the program (1-5). The portfolio also includes 10 networking reports (on relevant extracurricular events attended by students in their fields), reports on information technology workshops which students have each taken outside their classes, the student's business card, a job-hunting strategy narrative, and an essay discussing the 3-5 titles from the evolving PFMP Reading List which the student finds most relevant to his or her research. PFMP students write a 35- to 50-page master's thesis, which they write and defend in French (along with the professional portfolio), before a committee of faculty and qualified academic staff, at the end of their

program. Satisfactory progress in the program is gauged each semester by the Executive Director, who studies each student's performance against policy as stated in the PFMP "Requirements and Policies" document given to each student and kept, updated, in the Department and on the program website [see appendix 5]. Alumni regularly contribute professional updates on their own careers in L'ESSOR, the program newsletter published annually, which is also an important networking tool for all students and alumni (and other program stakeholders, such as board members and faculty), in all represented professions.

3. Assessment tools as a feature of program development

The PFMP (including the Certificate) was authorized to exist according to documents describing how it would work academically and professionally. Beginning in the fall of 2000, we needed to create tools for assessment that responded to the challenges of real students. Actual tools created include: a specific pedagogy and curriculum for the previously undefined tutorial and for the research methods seminar; a reworking of the Francophone culture and society course to include Quebec and to meet twice a week instead of once; a policy and guidelines document, which we created on the model of the existing equivalent in the M.A./Ph.D. program in French in terms of its style; an administrative model for hiring an ongoing consultant who finds our students their professional internships; a mechanism for funding the program (which allows it to exist according to its unique charge as a Capstones Initiative program); a reworking of existing course numbers to reflect more accurately the nature of the students enrolled in those courses (through the Divisional Committee); the identification of an Executive Director position, alongside two Faculty Co-Directors, as the maximal structure for running the program; the creation of an Interdisciplinary Faculty Steering Committee to serve as an Executive Committee and to advise the Executive Director in the day-to-day direction of the program; the creation of a Scholarships Committee to handle private donations; among others.

By this date (spring 2006), most of the assessment tools appear to work to the satisfaction of the program and its students and alumni, but potentially helpful future assessment tools include: a survey of alumni (regarding the ways in which their training here helped them in their professional lives following graduation), and an evaluative survey of current students before and after their professional internships.

**Program Assessment: Italian
Undergraduate and Graduate
April 2006**

Summary

Preface

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The Italian program is presently in a period of transition with regard to permanent faculty. In preparation for personnel changes, we are using this transition period to re-think a number of issues. If hiring proceeds as we hope, we will initiate a thorough review of programs beginning next fall, continuing into the following academic year.

Undergraduate Program

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The major concern in the undergraduate course sequence is the content of Italian 321-322, Introduction to Italian Literature. As the sequence is now designed, it can place unrealistic demands on students' linguistic abilities. Among secondary concerns is establishment of clearer goals and more consistent core content for Fourth Semester Italian (204).

Graduate Programs

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The two most pressing issues in terms of graduate study are establishment of a more effective format for the post-M.A. Qualifying Exam, and fashioning more explicit guidelines for students pursuing the Ph.D., particularly as regards the dissertation process.

Faculty Administrative Responsibilities

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All tenured or tenure-track Italian faculty members participate in all administrative aspects of the program, as well as serving on departmental committees. We intend to examine our internal organization to find ways of reducing burdens on time and energy.

Assessment Methods

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We use an undergraduate questionnaire, and we meet both individually and as a faculty body with graduate students. We will continue (and continue to refine) the undergraduate questionnaire. We intend also to meet more regularly with graduate students, to involve them in discussions regarding the graduate programs, and to adopt a new graduate questionnaire, so as to have the opinions of all involved.

Preface

The Italian program is in a period of transition with regard to permanent faculty. At present we are hoping to hire a specialist in Italian Renaissance Literature who will undertake duties this coming fall semester. Next year will be the last before our Medievalist retires, and we hope to recruit a specialist in the essentials of that period, particularly Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, for the following year. Concurrently, we still need to establish stability in the position of Director of Language Instruction, as recommended by the departmental review some years ago.

In light of these changes in the composition of the faculty, we are not inclined to undertake major revisions to the graduate and undergraduate programs at this time. We feel that it would be more fitting to conclude review of the structures of the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. once new faculty are in place, so that they will be able to participate fully in any decisions made. An important set of points at issue is to review overtly stated goals for each of our degrees, and to assess our success in reaching them.

In preparation for a full review of programs, however, we have embarked on assessment of our programs, in terms of content, efficiency and organization, in order to better meet students' needs and expectations. Our ongoing assessment is thus wide reaching. We outline here our efforts, as well as revisions which are under discussion.

Undergraduate Program

Post-secondary language programs are perennially beset by difficulties in harmonizing the trajectory of courses focused on language acquisition with subsequent "content" courses taught in the target language. The major challenge, among many, is to bring students to a level of linguistic competence that allows them to

- a) read and truly understand texts not designed for those of limited experience in the language itself, as well as in the culture whose presuppositions are implicit in the texts;
- b) understand lectures and participate in class discussions in the language;
- c) produce written work of appropriate sophistication of thought, couched in language that approaches grammatical accuracy.

The challenge is perhaps more keenly felt in an Italian program than in those attracting students with considerable language training in secondary school.

At present our course sequence remains in a traditional articulation. At the freshman-sophomore level, three semesters of elementary language (with the third devoted to review and expansion of morphology, syntax, and lexicon) are followed by a fourth semester intended to further solidify language skills while concurrently examining cultural topics through reading and discussion, and offering training in the fundamentals of writing at a level beyond the elementary.

As a self-contained component, this sequence appears to work well for those who leave Italian after either the third or fourth semester. Students who finish the three-semester language sequence with a grade of at least B normally have acquired basic linguistic and cultural competence of sort to enrich their lives, and to serve as preparation for further exploration of matters Italian in country or in relevant academic fields such as Art History, Music, History. Students who finish the fourth semester successfully have that

and more, and long experience demonstrates that the most talented can undertake study in Italy successfully. Within this apparent success, however, we have noted that Fourth Semester Italian, the crucial transition between the language sequence and more advanced content, may be in need of a clearer statement of goals, and some standardization of content from semester to semester.

For Italian majors and others who continue beyond the fourth semester, our next steps are two required courses for majors, Introduction to Italian Literature (Italian 321-322) and Advanced Composition and Conversation (311-312), both of which are designed in principle as year-long sequences. The greatest challenge in the course sequence is for those who continue in these courses without the natural language acquisition experience provided by an extended stay in Italy.

The specific content and methodology of Italian 311-312 varies by instructor, but the essence of the sequence is invariably that implied by its label: a focus on extended practice in active skills of speech and writing, stemming from contact with genuine texts of different types, increasingly including material easily accessible by internet. The sequence is satisfactory as it stands, although it would be preferable to have goals stated overtly as an orientation for both students and instructors.

We are increasingly conscious that the introduction to literature sequence is in need of revamping. The articulation of an anthology of literary highlights in chronological order from Medieval to contemporary is not ideally suited to students' linguistic abilities, in that the early texts, challenging linguistically (and often culturally-conceptually as well) are presented at the outset, while the more accessible modern texts come at the end of the sequence. Organizing this sequence in a more satisfactory way is our first priority in reshaping the undergraduate program, and we are presently exploring various options, such as beginning with more modern texts, or organizing by genre or by topic.

Our first steps in redesigning the undergraduate sequence can be summarized as follows.

Course	Tasks
204 Intermediate Italian (fourth semester)	Establish clear goals in terms of skills and knowledge. Guide content and method to achieve those goals both as a capstone course for the language sequence and as an effective bridge to study at more advanced levels.
311-312 Advanced Composition and Conversation	Establish clear course goals overall in terms of skills and knowledge, along with a core menu of readings and activities intended to achieve those goals.
321-322 Introduction to Italian Literature	Redesign the sequence to recognize students' linguistic progress, and to better serve as the foundation for more advanced literature courses.

Graduate Programs

Although there is no formal ranking system for graduate programs in Italian Studies, ours is one of the three largest in North America (second after University of Toronto; a bit larger in terms of faculty and students than University of California at Berkeley), and considered by many to be one of the top three in quality as well.

We pride ourselves in being able to offer our Ph.D. students specialization in all literary periods, Italian Film, and Italian Linguistics, along with broad training in all those fields. This is especially valuable for future Italian faculty, as most positions in Italian throughout the country are in departments that offer an undergraduate major only, or at most the M.A., and are thus best filled by generalists. The recent addition of a cogently articulated minor in Second Language Acquisition is a welcome lagniappe for Ph.D. students who specifically wish to enhance their skills in language teaching, and the training received can be decisive on the job market. In terms of job placement, Ph.D. graduates of recent years have been successful in entering positions – some now tenured – at institutions such as University of Virginia, The Ohio State University, University of Arizona, Colgate University, Montclair State University, Gettysburg College, University of Central Florida, and several others.

We intend to continue our strategy of producing well-trained generalists with strong specialization. We have begun discussions as to how we can maintain our program quality, while at the same time introduce efficiencies to streamline some aspects of graduate students’ progress, and recognize changes in the fields of our competence. One of our most pressing needs in this regard is establishment of a more effective method of dealing with the transition from M.A. status to Ph.D.

Specifically, we now have in place a Qualifying Exam which is essentially an *explication de texte* prepared by the student in advance. While this is useful as an exercise in organization and presentation, as well as in textual analysis, it is normally not maximally revealing of the candidate’s promise as a research scholar. In the near future we hope to establish a format that will more directly test this aspect. One possibility under discussion is to assign the candidate a tightly focused topic, with a set period of time in which to conduct research for a scholarly presentation before the examining faculty.

A second procedural improvement to the graduate program is to establish clearer and more precise guidelines with regard to the trajectory of the Ph.D. degree, an effort now in progress. Some matters merely need to be made more explicit and clear: language requirements and how to fulfill them, advising, maintaining satisfactory progress. Others are in need of revision as well as clearer presentation: norms, guidelines, and timelines for the dissertation process. In this second category, we are working to put in place a more efficient set of procedures intended to more closely mentor and monitor dissertators, with the goal of achieving more efficient research and writing of dissertations of high quality. Our prime concerns for the graduate program can be summarized as follows.

Issue	Goal
Improved diagnostic for entry into Ph.D. candidacy	A procedure that allows students to demonstrate capacity for original research in their field of interest.
Clearer, more explicit guidelines for the	A document that answers more clearly

Ph.D.	and explicitly than the present one all essential student questions about procedures and requirements, with special effort focused on timelines, mentoring, and monitoring of the dissertation process.
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Faculty Administrative Responsibilities

In addition to serving on committees at the Department level, as a relatively small program in terms of number of tenured or tenure-track faculty (at present six), all members typically participate fully in those aspects of the program that in a larger contingent would be divided into committee responsibilities. While we find that this has a positive effect in many ways, and it may well be one of the sources of the genuine collegiality found among the Italian faculty, such full participation also can sap energies and occupy an extraordinary amount of time. Our discussions of this have so far remained at the informal level. As we assess our overall program in other ways, we will also assess our duties and their effectiveness in an effort to establish solutions to this lingering problem.

Assessment Methods

In a small program in terms of number of undergraduate majors and graduate students, we find that direct observation of student performance and progress is an invaluable means of assessment. Constant interaction with students at all levels allows observation of the effects of individual courses and of the programs as articulated entities. At the same time, we recognize that more formal and less anecdotal surveys can be crucial in revealing what our participant observation cannot.

Each year we collect the responses of undergraduate majors to a questionnaire distributed toward the end of the academic year (see attachment). Normally, these are reviewed by the Associate Chair for Italian, and results are reported to the faculty. The information obtained helps us in establishing more satisfactory requirements and procedures. By way of example, not long ago we changed undergraduate major requirements to reflect the fact that an erstwhile required literature course populated also with advanced graduate students was not an effective capstone for undergraduate students. As we delve further into reassessment and possible redesign of the undergraduate major, student responses to the questionnaire will play an essential role in the decision making.

As a relatively small unit, we have traditionally met individually with students or as a faculty body with student representatives to solicit their input regarding the articulation and content of the graduate programs. Last month, for example we met with the co-president of GAFIS (Graduate of French and Italian Students) and the elected Italian representative of GAFIS to the faculty, in a wide-ranging and very helpful discussion of matters of concern to both students and faculty. We will involve student representatives in discussions as we move forward with revisions to the graduate program, and we plan to introduce a new questionnaire for present and recent graduate students in order to obtain the direct input of all individuals.