



College of Letters and Science  
Assessment Report

**Abstract:** The Undergraduate Program Committee of the Department of German embarked on its assessment of the undergraduate major in the Fall of 1997 armed with the knowledge that the undergraduate program in German at the UW-Madison has long been recognized as one of the best in the nation. (The two most recent Gourman reports [1992, 1996] have ranked the program second overall, behind Yale and ahead of Princeton. While the assessment process has tended to confirm that this reputation is well deserved, it has also provided a stimulus for strengthening selected aspects of the major and laid the foundation for continued monitoring of the undergraduate program. In particular, the exit questionnaire for graduating seniors majoring in German which was administered this year in our capstone courses has (in conjunction with pre-existing assessment tools such as student course evaluations and enrollment statistics) already yielded insights that have led the Department to consider and adopt several changes in our undergraduate major. In response to a perceived desire on the part of our students for greater flexibility in fulfilling the course requirements for the major, the Department approved a proposal to deemphasize the distinction that had hitherto been made between core courses and electives while allowing students greater freedom to combine courses taken for 3 and 4 credits. In reaction to an documented shift in student interest away from courses with a narrowly defined literary focus and towards those which take a more holistic approach to the study of German literature and culture, a plan was proposed and accepted to merge our 3rd-year literature sequence (German 221-222) and our 3rd-year culture sequence (German 241 -242) into a newly defined 221-222 sequence entitled "Introduction to German Literature and Culture I & II." These changes will be submitted to the Humanities Divisional Committee in fall 1998.

Assessment Tools Used:

	<i>Direct Indicators</i>	
	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
National Exams	_____	_____
Local Exams	_____	<u>Beginning 1998-99</u>
Capstone Course(s)	_____	_____
Embedded Testing	_____	_____
Student Portfolios	_____	_____
Review of theses & dissertations	_____	<u>Beginning 1998-99</u>
Performance Evaluations	_____	_____
Pre and Post Testing	_____	_____
	<i>Indirect Indicators</i>	
	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
Student Surveys	<u>1997-98</u>	<u>Beginning 1998-99</u>
Exit Interviews	<u>1997-98</u>	<u>Beginning 1998-99</u>
Alumni Surveys	_____	_____
Employer Surveys	_____	_____
External Reviews	_____	_____
	<i>Other Indicators Used</i>	
Review of National Rankings of Programs in German	<u>1997-98</u>	_____
Review of Class Evaluations	<u>1997-98</u>	_____
Review of Enrollment Statistics	<u>1997-98</u>	_____

## Narrative:

A. The Undergraduate Program Committee undertook a detailed comparison of the structure and curriculum of our undergraduate program with those of more than twenty other leading German programs operated by diverse public and private institutions (ranging from large research universities to small liberal arts colleges) in various parts of the country. **RESULT:** The comparison confirms that our program is indeed exemplary. Thanks to the size of our student clientele, ours is one of a handful of American German programs that is able offer undergraduate majors a full range of courses from the introductory through the advanced with three different options for specialization on the junior and senior levels: German culture, German literature, and German linguistics. The competing needs for breadth and depth of coverage at the upper levels are satisfied to a large extent through a curriculum that combines lecture-type survey courses with specialized seminars. However, the committee recognized that a tendency towards ever greater specialization must not be permitted to jeopardize the ability of our undergraduate program to offer students continued training in the language and increased familiarity with the target culture in *all* undergraduate courses and that our faculty must not succumb to the temptation to relegate these tasks to a set of "language skills courses." (On this point, see recent articles by H. Seeba in *The German Quarterly* and by D. James in *Profession*.) It will be an important continuing function of the assessment process in future years to monitor the extent to which all courses in our curriculum are helping students to gain a better grasp of the German language and a deeper understanding of the culture of the German-speaking countries.

B. Changes in foreign language pedagogy in recent years prompted the committee to urge that closer attention be paid to the way in which the individual courses in our elementary and intermediate sequence (German 101-226) articulate with and build upon one another. In particular, the third-year composition and conversation courses (225 and 226) are were the focus of special critical concern.

**RESULT:** In cooperation with our language supervisors and coordinators, the Undergraduate Program Committee has updated and greatly expanded the course descriptions for German 101-226 and provided a detailed list of pedagogical goals for each course. This articulation document should enable high school teachers to assess more accurately their students' level of proficiency in terms of our program and help the SOAR program advisors to provide better counseling about our program to incoming freshmen with previous work in German. Particular attention has been paid to closer articulation of German 225 with German 226.

C. A questionnaire for German 225, an important "entry course" for many freshmen with four years of high school German, is currently being developed and will be used from Fall 1998 on in order to provide us with demographic data about our students that will enable us to better gauge their interests and needs.

D. The Committee designed a detailed exit questionnaire for graduating seniors/German majors that was implemented for the first time this year (fall and spring 1997/8).

**RESULT:** Preliminary results indicate a high degree of satisfaction with both the quality of our program and the choices it offers our majors. The questionnaire will be used each semester from now on, with continuous evaluation and monitoring of student responses. Preliminary results of student feedback have been incorporated into the suggested changes in the program outlined below.

E. The Committee reviewed enrollment patterns for the past 5 years for all undergraduate courses as an indicator of student interest in and satisfaction with the individual course offerings.

**RESULT:** For most courses, enrollments are holding steady at acceptable levels, indicating that the courses are serving their intended function within our major reasonably well. Repeated enrollment fluctuations and occasional underenrollments were, however, found for the following courses: 221 and 222 (our third-year literature sequence), as well as in 303 ("Romanik und Nachromantik") and 304 ("Realismus und Naturalismus"). The Committee discussed possible causes for these fluctuations and formulated a recommendation (subsequently accepted by the Department) to combine German 221 and 222 with their counterparts in our third-year culture sequence. The new courses ("Introduction to German Literature and Culture I & II") should not only serve to shore up sagging enrollments in 221-222 but also address a complaint of some of the students filling out the exit questionnaire that they had been required to choose between our literature and culture tracks too early in their studies. The new hybrid courses will, we hope, permit a more integrated approach to literature and culture, while continuing to provide needed practice in the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). With regard to German 303 and 304, a recommendation from the Committee that they be merged into a single course (303) covering the entire 19th century was also accepted by the department. One other course that was found to have been repeatedly underenrolled is 385, the honors seminar in German literature. The revision of the German major requirements outlined under (G) below seeks to remedy this problem.

F. The Committee undertook a critical review of student evaluations for German 409 and 611, our two pre-1750 courses. Since these courses can be considered a hallmark of our undergraduate major (most German programs do not offer any pre-1750 courses), it was deemed important to assess whether they were serving a useful function for our students.

**RESULT:** Close scrutiny of both the quantitative evaluations and student comments for these courses collected in recent years confirmed their importance and continued popularity. Given the emphasis in our other advanced undergraduate courses on more contemporary (and hence more easily accessible) texts and cultural phenomena, German 409 and 611 serve to introduce students to areas with which they would otherwise not become familiar. That the two courses kindle considerable enthusiasm for their subject matter is borne out by such student comments as the following:

"Never in a million years did I think I would find medieval literature so interesting."

"When I first got into this class, I didn't think it would stimulate my interest in ANY way. But I was soon proven wrong. This was one of the most fascinating classes I've ever taken, and I would certainly recommend it to other students thinking about taking it."

The Undergraduate Program Committee concluded that no change was necessary.

G. The Committee reviewed the major requirements for the three separate tracks in connection with student feedback from the questionnaires administered in the capstone courses 650, 683, 610, 410

**RESULT:** While the Committee found that the three tracks were in general functioning quite well, it proposed a number of changes to the Department in response to students' expressed desire for greater flexibility in fulfilling the requirements for the major. These changes focused on two areas: (1) more flexible credit choices and more courses that can be taken for variable credit and (2) a less rigorous distinction between core courses and electives. These changes have been approved by the Department in April 1998 for implementation with the next revision of the undergraduate bulletin.

## **(Revised) Assessment Plan for the Undergraduate Major in German**

The L&S document on Assessment Information (Sept. 21, 1996) lays out three goals (p. 4) for review of undergraduate majors and we will respond to those points in turn (I-III). Note that the steps described below reflect part of our own normal, ongoing review of our programs. We stress that these goal statements form part of a constant, evolutionary process and we fully expect them to be revised and sharpened over time, as well as adjusted to fit new and changes circumstances.

### **I. Departments are asked to provide "a clear statement of educational objectives."**

#### **A. Goal statements for lower division courses (attached)**

The Undergraduate Program Committee is preparing detailed goal statements for our lower division language courses (101-226). These courses make up just over 69% of our total departmental enrollments this semester and feed our upper division and, ultimately, our graduate courses.

These goals are intended to give TAs, students and faculty, as well as SOAR advisers and others in the University, as well as high school teachers and students, a clear overview of both the structure of our lower division program and concrete information on any given lower division course.

The goals expressed represent a minimum. For example, the reading guidelines for German 204 indicate that six to eight short stories might be read. Presently, the 204 syllabus includes ten short stories.

#### **B. Tracking students**

On a closely related matter, changing student populations and levels of preparation make it useful for us to survey students to find out where the enrollments in a given class come from. We are undertaking such a survey for our 5th semester conversation/composition class currently. The results of this survey (and others to be built into our end-of-semester evaluations) will allow us to integrate students coming into our program from outside (most often from high schools).

#### **C. Assessment of the major**

As we complete assessment of our 101-226 sequence, we are turning our focus to a complete and thorough evaluation of the structure and goals of our undergraduate majors in German literature, culture, and linguistics/philology.

### **II. Departments are asked to develop "means of assessment for evaluation of the results of the program in each undergraduate major."**

In addition to the various and long-standing assessment tools we have employed on the undergraduate level (departmental records of GPAs, mandatory student evaluations kept on file, regularly published sets of student papers, and so forth), we are adding two additional pieces of capstone evaluation":

- written surveys, to be conducted in 610, 611, 650, and 683
- exit interviewing, to be conducted annually

### **III. Departments are expected to "establish committees to review the results of the tests."**

The Undergraduate Program Committee will have the responsibility of reviewing the results of each year's assessment efforts and of transmitting its findings to the Department in an annual report. This report will also contain recommendations for possible departmental action to remedy problems in the undergraduate curriculum that have been identified through the year's assessment activities. The Committee's role in the feedback mechanism will also include the suggestion of refinements in the assessment procedures whenever it feels that a given year's assessment efforts have yielded inadequate information for measuring the effectiveness of the undergraduate program.

German 101 to 226: Basic Description

November 14, 1996

**Readings and vocabulary-building:**

- 101 Text: *Deutsch - na klar!* 2nd ed.: Einführung, Kapitel 1-7.

Authentic advertizing texts and brief reading selections from the popular press deal with subjects of Familie, Freunde, Alltag, Einkaufen, Freizeit, Sport, usw.

Vocabulary lists are at the end of each Kapitel, as well as sections entitled Wörter im Kontext. Students will also learn how to use a standard-sized bilingual dictionary.

Activities and tests related to readings section, as well as related materials in Workbook, are part of Sprache im Kontext.

- 102 Texts: *Deutsch - na klar!* 2nd ed.: Kapitel 8-14, Übergang.  
Short stories as handouts.

Authentic advertizing texts, brief reading selections from the popular press, and additional stories deal with subjects such as Gesundheit, Unterkunft, Reisen, Zukunft, Haushalt, Meinungen, Medien, deutsche Geschichte.

Vocabulary lists are at the end of each Kapitel, as well as sections entitled Wörter im Kontext. Students will also learn how to use a standard-sized bilingual dictionary.

Activities and tests related to readings section, as well as related materials in Workbook, are part of Sprache im Kontext.

Short stories such as "Zugauskunft", "Der Stift", "Wenn die Haifische Menschen wären", "Die Tochter", "Der hellgraue Frühjahrmantel", "Rotkäppchen", and "Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten" may be distributed as handouts.

- 203 Texts: *Kaleidoskop*, 4th ed.: Erster Teil, Themen 1-7.

In *Kaleidoskop*, texts include both cultural readings and literary works (short stories and poems) on the topics Freizeit, Kommunikation, Deutschland, Gleichberechtigung, Musik, and Arbeit. The text offers exercises relating to both content and vocabulary- building.

- 204 Texts: *Kaleidoskop*, 4th ed.: Erster Teil, Themen 8-10.

*Aus unserer Zeit*, 4th ed.

Also recommended: Paul Kurt Ackermann's edition of *Der Besuch der alten Dame*.

In *Kaleidoskop*, the cultural readings, short stories and poems relate to the topics Multikulturelle Gesellschaft, Partnerschaft, Verkehr, and Umwelt, with supporting exercises on content and vocabulary.

Six or seven stories can be read from *Aus unserer Zeit*, including, for example, "Der Wolf", "Ein altes Blatt", "Das Tor zur Welt", "Der violette Tod", "Renata", "Die Krähe", "In einer dunklen Welt", and "Gespenster". Discussion questions and vocabulary exercises must be provided by the instructor. (If the Dürrenmatt play is used, fewer stories will be read.)

225 Text: a xeroxed course packet of readings and supporting materials (Carla Love):

The packet includes current newspaper and magazine articles as well as other texts on topics of everyday life and current events (for 1995-96: Wohnen, Ausbildung und Beruf, Familie, Reisen und Urlaub, Autos und Fahren, Geld und Einkaufen, Umwelt, Deutsche und Ausländer); vocabulary lists relating to each topic; and vocabulary-building exercises, including translations, fill-ins, and short-answer questions.

Class discussion of the readings and essays on each topic require the use of new vocabulary in context.

Exams consisting of short-answer questions and essay questions relate to the course topics and test vocabulary usage.

226 Text: *Der treffende Ausdruck*, 2nd ed., by Brigitte Turneure:

The readings consist of contemporary short stories and essays, with vocabulary lists for each chapter.

Intensive practice in building vocabulary is provided

- through discussion and interpretation of the readings, based on questions on the text. Some additional exercises by the instructor to give practice using the new vocabulary in context are necessary.
- through a section on "Redemittel" in each chapter, with supporting exercises and suggestions for discussion.
- through a section on "Das passende Wort" in each chapter with extensive exercises for practice.

### Grammar:

101 The course introduces the following structures:

Präsens Indikativ Aktiv  
Perfekt Indikativ Aktiv  
Imperativ  
Substantiv, Pronomen  
männlich, weiblich, sächlich  
Nominativ, Akkusativ, Dativ  
Präposition  
Konjunktion  
S-V-X.  
V-S-X?  
V-(S)-X!

102 The course introduces the following structures, as well as reviews those introduced in 101:

Präteritum Indikativ Aktiv  
Präsens Konjunktiv II Aktiv  
Perfekt Konjunktiv II Aktiv  
Präsens Indikativ Passiv  
Präteritum Indikativ Passiv  
Adjektiv  
X-V-S.  
daß-S-X-V

203 and 204 The courses introduce the following structures, as well as review those introduced in 101 and 102 (text: *Kaleidoskop*, Zweiter Teil):

Futur Indikativ Aktiv (productive)  
Perfekt Indikativ Passiv (receptive)  
Plusquamperfekt Indikativ Aktiv (productive)  
Genitiv (productive)  
Präsens Konjunktiv I Aktiv (receptive)  
Perfekt Konjunktiv I Aktiv (receptive)

225 Text: *A Practical Review of German Grammar*, 2nd ed., by Gerda Dippmann.

A systematic and complete grammar review with written homework assignments and quizzes, with special emphasis on modal verbs, relative clauses, subjunctive II, and the passive.

226 Text: Turneure's *Der treffende Ausdruck*.

Each chapter reviews selected elements of German grammar. Special emphasis continues on modal verbs, relative clauses, the passive, and the subjunctive, now adding a focus on indirect speech. There are frequent written homework assignments and quizzes.

**Writing:** Over the six semester sequence, students practice writing in various genres, using vocabulary and stylistic elements appropriate to the genre. Such types of writing include descriptions of oneself and one's activities, brief notes of communication to others, journals (all beginning in the first semester); narratives, more formal letters (beginning in the second semester); reports, reviews of movies or restaurants, description and analysis of works of art, interpretations of stories, rewriting parts of stories from another point of view or continuing a story (beginning in the second year); summaries of German newspaper and magazine articles, position papers, and persuasive essays (beginning in the third year).

As general guidelines, in each semester students will have from 5 to 8 formal writing assignments, beginning with paragraphs in the first semester and working up to essays of 300-500 words in the sixth semester. Students should have the opportunity to revise their work, correcting grammatical errors, refining vocabulary choices, and improving style. Additional informal writing assignments can also help develop fluency and accuracy by concentrating, for example, on specific points of grammar and vocabulary.

**Speaking:** The goal of the 101 to 226 sequence is to develop communicative proficiency, with an emphasis on both fluency and accuracy. At all levels the language of communication is German. In the first three semesters, students develop communicative skills through activities such as informal conversation on everyday matters, role playing, skits, discussing readings, and talking about their own experiences; by the fourth semester, individual or group presentations relating to course readings or other topics of interest can be added. By the end of the fourth semester, the speaking ability of students should be such that they can interact with native speakers, function in a variety of social settings, and choose correct grammatical structures with reasonable consistency.

In the fifth semester, in addition to classroom discussions which go into greater depth on topics relating to German culture, more formal possibilities for oral presentations might include, for example, talking in detail about a topic of personal interest and summarizing and analyzing an article from a German magazine or newspaper; in such presentations students become more independent of written texts as they speak and use vocabulary and style which will be accessible to the class. In the sixth semester, group projects are appropriate: small groups of students research and present to the class a topic relating to German culture of interest to them and not otherwise addressed in the course. While students in the first semester might practice speaking briefly on a given topic, by the fifth semester they will be making up to ten-minute presentations; and the group projects in the sixth semester will provide each group with one to two class days for their joint presentation.

## (Revised) Assessment Plan for the Graduate Program in German

The Department of German proposes the following plan for the assessment of our graduate program. We follow the four recommended steps in the following sections of our plan:

- I. Establishment of clear educational goals
- II. Development of instruments or methods to measure success in achieving goals
- III. Plan to use assessment results
- IV. Timetable for periodic review

### I. Educational goals in graduate program

The Department of German considers the acquisition of the following professional skills vital to the completion of a graduate degree in German:

- 1) acquisition of knowledge or coverage of field—including a) extensive knowledge of texts and facts appropriate to the field, b) understanding of basic theoretical and methodological models, c) a grasp of historical developments
- 2) ability to conduct independent, original research—including training in bibliography (how to search for materials; how to construct bibliographies), critical survey of existing scholarship (Forschungsbericht), critical scholarly work with original sources and materials, formulating research questions, logic of argumentation
- 3) scholarly writing skills—including reviews of existing scholarship, abstracts, proposals, research papers
- 4) teaching skills—including foreign language and area of scholarly specialization
- 5) native or near-native fluency in German

Ways to work toward accomplishments in the above areas in our Ph.D. program include coursework and independent study in the major field, examinations, minor fields, supervised teaching, and involvement in the intellectual life of the department.

Additional targets essential to the achievement of educational goals in the graduate program:

- 1) high quality of incoming students
- 2) adequate financial support

### II. Instruments and methods for assessment

The Department of German plans to use the following methods to assess the success of the graduate program in achieving the educational goals listed in section I.

- 1) exit interviewing of students earning a Ph.D. degree
- 2) periodic review of the written examinations taken at the M.A. level
- 3) periodic review of a selection of Ph.D. dissertations
- 4) ongoing assessment of the graduate program by the Graduate Program Committee
- 5) comparison of financial support offered by the UW-Madison with comparable institutions granting Ph.D. degrees in German.
- 6) with the help of the Graduate School, periodic review of the GRE scores and undergraduate GPAs of the applicants for graduate work in German compared with the university average.

### III. Productive use of assessment results

It is expected that the results of the assessment methods listed above will be reviewed by the Graduate Program Committee and that the results of this critical review will be presented to the Department in an annual report that will be discussed at a departmental meeting. Included in that report will be recommendations, for possible departmental action, to remedy any problems in the graduate curriculum that have been identified through the year's assessment activities. The Committee's



role in the feedback mechanism will also include the suggestion of refinements in the assessment procedures whenever it feels that a given year's assessment efforts have yielded inadequate information for measuring the effectiveness of the graduate program.

#### **IV. Suggested timetable for implementation**

The methods under II should be implemented according to the following timetable:

- 1) exit interviews on a continuing basis
- 2) periodic reviews of MA examinations every 5 years
- 3) periodic review of selected Ph.D. dissertations every 5 years
- 4) assessment of graduate program on an ongoing basis
- 5) comparison of financial support every 5 years
- 6) comparative review of pool of applicants every five years