

Center for Southeast Asian Studies
College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison
207 Ingraham Hall
1155 Observatory Drive
Madison WI 53706-1397
608-263-1755

Assessment Plan and Operations
Degree: BA in Asian Studies (Concentration Southeast Asia)

The BA degree in Asian Studies has two concentrations, one on East Asia (administered by the East Asia Studies Program) and one on Southeast Asia (administered by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies). The latter is the focus of this report. The BA Concentration on Southeast Asia is a multidisciplinary degree program that requires 30 credits (at least 8 in the social science, 8 in the humanities, and 8 in a single discipline) of courses with Southeast Asian area content and at least two years (the equivalent of 4 semesters) of proficiency in a Southeast Asian language. In addition, the program encourages students to participate in one of the three major study abroad options for undergraduates: in Thailand (College Year in Thailand), Indonesia, and Vietnam. At present there are 18 declared majors in the Southeast Asia concentration, with 21 BA degrees having been awarded in the major since Spring 2000.

The BA program, as well as our MA program, are closely linked to the Center's overall mission "to promote teaching and research about Southeast Asia, including major languages of the region, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels" (Quality Reinvestment Self Study, 2/1992). The BA and MA programs of the Center are overseen by a five-member faculty committee formed by the Center Director. This committee, the Education Committee, periodically meets to discuss curriculum matters and to discuss program needs with the academic and administrative advisors who are permanent academic staff employed by the Center.

As a liberal arts degree, the BA program in Southeast Asian studies is not intended to provide students with training for entry into any specific area of employment or career. Like other liberal arts programs it provides students with a solid undergraduate background and prepares them for several post-BA pursuits, including a wide range of employment opportunities in non-government and local and national government institutions (including the foreign service). In these pursuits, the program provides students with the opportunity to develop a broad multidisciplinary understanding of one major region of the world: Southeast Asia, in addition to preparing students to work within the large communities of recent immigrants from Southeast Asia, in particular with Americans of Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian heritage. As a rigorous liberal arts program, the BA degree can be and frequently is used by students planning post-BA graduate studies, including law, business administration, policy, environmental and development studies, certificate programs for K-12 teaching, and a large number of graduate degree programs in the social sciences and humanities.

Based largely on the choice of language (Burmese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Thai, or Vietnamese), students develop a strong concentration on one Southeast Asian country or ethnic group. As such, most majors develop advanced proficiency in one language and focus their course

work on a specific Southeast Asian nation, resulting in their obtaining considerable expertise on this area. In addition, the requirements encourage students to develop a disciplinary concentration, most recently in our program on history, political science, anthropology, economics, music, or literature. In terms of objectives, students graduate from the program with three areas of achievement: a comprehensive background on the region of Southeast Asia; a strong area and language concentration on one Southeast Asian country; and a disciplinary concentration, generally focused on this same country.

To date the Center's assessment efforts have been limited to in-depth interaction with each student through regular advising, in particular during the last three or four semesters before graduation. The Center's undergraduate adviser meets frequently with these students to monitor course work in both area and language and, in most cases, discusses post-BA career or graduate study options. In the coming years, we plan to institutionalize two new methods of assessment:

a) In recent years, especially in connection with our MA program, we have worked more closely with the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia (LCA) to design and administer language proficiency tests to graduating students. Proficiency tests of this kind are currently being perfected by UW-Madison language-teaching pedagogists in collaboration with their colleagues nationwide and it is anticipated that this effort will assist in the development of national standards for evaluating Southeast Asian language proficiency and the effectiveness of specific language-teaching methodologies. It is our plan in the coming years to institutionalize formal entry and exit proficiency tests for all majors and to maintain these records for periodic assessment of the language component of the degree program and to determine if our graduates are meeting national standards.

b) In addition to on-going advisory services, we will also attempt to assess what students have learned, in particular from their own perspectives, through the implementation of an exit interview and questionnaire. A preliminary draft of the exit interview and questionnaire is attached.

The above information will be used to enhance the Center's advising services, to review degree requirements as courses and faculty and teaching staff change, and to encourage faculty to modify course content to provide optimal learning environments for students.

Assessment Plan and Operations
Degree: MA in Southeast Asian Studies

The MA degree in Southeast Asian Studies was inaugurated in 1991 and is administered directly by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. The MA program is overseen by a five-member faculty committee appointed by the Center Director (a tenured faculty member). This committee, the Education Committee, is responsible for reviewing all applications and for admitting or rejecting all applicants to the program. At present there are 20 students registered in the MA in Southeast Asia Studies, with 25 MA degrees having been awarded since Spring 2000.

The MA program, as well as our BA program (as noted), are closely linked to the Center's overall mission "to promote teaching and research about Southeast Asia, including major languages of the region, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels" (Quality Reinvestment Self Study, 2/1992). In addition to evaluating and selecting students for the program, the Education Committee meets periodically to discuss curriculum matters and program needs, and remains in close consultation with the academic and administrative advisors who are permanent academic staff employed by the Center.

The MA in Southeast Asia Studies is a multidisciplinary degree program that requires 24 credits of Southeast Asian area content courses (a least 12 credits in a single discipline) and a minimum of two years (the equivalent of 4 semesters) of proficiency in a Southeast Asian language. In addition, students must write at least two major seminar papers, one of which must be defended in an oral examination administered by three faculty members affiliated with the Center's program, one of whom serves at the student's project advisor.

As a multidisciplinary degree, the MA in Southeast Asian Studies is intended to provide graduates with the language and area skills to find employment in a wide range of careers relating to Southeast Asia, including employment opportunities in non-government and local and national government institutions (among them, the foreign service). With these objectives in mind, the program provides students with the opportunity to develop a strong multidisciplinary understanding of one major region of the world: Southeast Asia, in addition to preparing students to work within the large communities of recent immigrants from Southeast Asia, in particular with Americans of Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian heritage. In addition, the MA degree can be and frequently is used by students planning doctoral studies in the social sciences and humanities or other post-BA graduate study in law, business administration, policy, environmental and development studies, and secondary and post-secondary education.

Based largely on the choice of language (Burmese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Thai, or Vietnamese), students develop a strong concentration on one Southeast Asian country or ethnic group. As such, most majors develop advanced proficiency in one language and focus their course work on a specific Southeast Asian nation, resulting in their obtaining considerable expertise on this area. In addition, the requirements encourage students to develop a disciplinary concentration (of at least 12 credits), most recently in our program on history, political science, anthropology, economics, music, or literature. In terms of objectives, students graduate from the program with three areas of achievement: a comprehensive background on the region of Southeast Asia; a strong area and language concentration on one Southeast Asian country; and a disciplinary concentration,

frequently focused on this same country.

For the past five years, the assessment efforts for the Center's MA program have been concentrated on four major activities:

a) In-depth interaction with each student through regular advising, concentrated on areas of specialization. MA students meet regularly with the graduate adviser for course selection, disciplinary concentrations, project selection, and overseas and career opportunities; once they have identified their disciplinary and language concentrations (which generally determine their country focus), they work closely with one-to-three faculty members on their major writing projects, including their MA paper, which will be defended in an oral examination. Throughout this process, efforts are made to assess the students progress in the program and the impact of the program on the student's educational objectives.

b) Through the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia (LCA) and the relevant teaching staff (supervised now by LCA language pedagogist, Erlin S. Barnard), a language proficiency exam is administered to each MA graduate during their final semester. This exam is aimed at determining the student's level of proficiency in the relevant Southeast Asian language at the time of graduation, and a record of this examination is kept in the student's permanent file at the Center's office.

c) As noted, each student is required to pass an oral examination based on a major writing project. The writing project is worked out closely with a faculty mentor and must then be read and approved by two other members of the Center's faculty, all three of whom will participate in the student's oral examination. A revised copy of this paper must then be submitted to the Center and placed in the student's permanent file.

d) Finally, the Center regularly administers an exit interview and questionnaire that is also placed in the student's permanent file at the Center's office.

The above information is and will continue to be reviewed by the Center's Education Committee and used to enhance the Center's advising services, to review degree requirements as courses and faculty and teaching staff change, and to encourage faculty to modify course content to provide optimal learning environments for students.

To date this method of assessment has proved sufficient for our program. There are two areas where we are working to improve our assessment tools:

1) We feel the need to revise our exit interview and questionnaire to provide us with more comprehensive information for revising the program. A revised exit interview/questionnaire is attached (B).

2) We have for some time been concerned that the language proficiency examinations do not reflect national standards or proficiency levels for all Southeast Asian languages. As such, in connection with our US Department of Education Title VI grant, we are currently working with LCA's language-teaching and supervisory staff and Southeast Asian language teachers across the country, to design and implement national standards for measuring and evaluating Southeast Asian language

proficiency. As noted for the BA program, once these standards and measurements have been perfected, it is our plan to institutionalize their use in our program, permitting us to better assess our language-training and to better evaluate student proficiency in the relevant languages.

