

May 10, 2006

Gary Sandefur, Dean
School of Letters and Sciences
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Cc: Elaine Klein, Magdalena Hauner, Judy Anderson

Dear Dean Sandefur:

It is my pleasure to submit to you this report on the assessment procedures employed by the Department of Scandinavian Studies. Assessment is an important part of any unit's effectiveness and we take it very seriously. I welcome any feedback you may have on our procedures and experiences in this area.

Best wishes,

Thomas A. DuBois
Chair,
Department of Scandinavian Studies

Assessment Plan,
Department of Scandinavian Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2006

The Department of Scandinavian Studies developed an assessment plan for both its undergraduate and graduate programs in October 1996. The plan involved a detailed articulation of the Department's curricular goals, development of a set of methods and instruments for assessing student progress toward these goals, and the creation of a mechanism for using the data gained by the assessments to modify or improve the curriculum.

In brief, the assessment procedures and instruments are as follows:

Undergraduate majors

1. Embedded testing to check progress toward the proficiency goal of Advanced Level on the ACTFL Guidelines.
2. Examination of one paper per student for proficiency in expository English as well as facility in written communication.
3. An Exit interview concerning the overall value of the major.

Master's students

1. Master's final examination (and optional thesis), instituted as part of the curriculum.
2. Exit interview.

Ph.D. students

1. Doctoral preliminary and final examination and dissertation, instituted as part of the curriculum.
2. Exit interview.

In the last decade, the Department has implemented this plan and used it to discern weaknesses and successes in the curriculum. The assessment measures have been regularly discussed at faculty meetings and department retreats each year, usually with a

focus on a single student group and issue each term. Aspects of the curriculum have been modified where necessary as a result. For instance, during the Academic Year 2006, as detailed below, we have focused on the issues of achieving proficiency in undergraduate students' target languages and its relation to the pedagogical training of our graduate teaching assistants. Several further possible measures have emerged for assessing our success with graduate students, and these are mentioned below. Assessment procedures, like all aspects of curriculum, are always in process, and we regard the ongoing discussion and adjustment of our assessment procedures a necessary and integral part of our department's activities.

Currently, we are in the process of revising our curricular goals for graduate students (in all three tracks: Language and Literature, Linguistics/Philology, and Area Studies) who are employed to teach language as part of their graduate training here. The impetus for this revision came from two assessment instruments: undergraduate exit interviews regarding student educational experiences as majors, and graduate exit interviews regarding student views of the graduate curriculum and its relevancy. We are now investigating the possibility of requiring a pedagogy course and instituting a set of weekly workshop meetings in which teaching assistants would receive regular feedback and practical guidance regarding their syllabus design, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures. This year, teaching assistants voluntarily agreed to take a pedagogy course (taught by Prof. Monica Chavez of the German Department) and provided written assessments of the course and its usefulness for their teaching. During the spring semester, an ad hoc committee made up of all the Department faculty that regularly teach first-year language met to discuss the experiment and student views of its value. During the coming week (our last faculty meeting of the year) the entire faculty will discuss this experiment and hear the report of the ad hoc committee. Graduate students will have a further opportunity to contribute to that discussion as well. If, after discussion, the Department faculty decides to mandate a pedagogy requirement in the future, the Office of the Dean will be notified of the curricular change. This new initiative is a direct result of the exit interviews we have received and thus reflects the functioning feedback mechanism we have put in place. Next year, in the fall semester, we are planning to revisit the Department's Literature Master's Reading List, again in response to student exit interviews. If concrete changes to our program result from these experiments, we will amend the Department's Assessment Plan accordingly.

In a recent plenary meeting of the chairs and administrators of the School of Letters and Science, Elaine Klein introduced on-line survey tools for producing (predominantly indirect) assessments of curricula. The Department considered these possibilities, but determined that, given the small size of the programs (some fifty undergraduate majors and less than twenty graduate students), the Department's own exit interviews sufficed.

A further assessment procedure has emerged, however, within our discipline during the last two years. Our field's major professional organization, the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, holds an annual conference in May of each year. Graduate students (usually advanced Master's or Ph.D. students) are permitted to propose a paper for the conference, but acceptance of these papers is not automatic. Beginning

two years ago, the paper must first be evaluated by the graduate student's committee chair. The chair's approval of the paper must then be conveyed to the organizing committee of the conference via email. The conference committee then evaluates the paper on its merits and either accepts or rejects the proposal. By tracking the number of graduate papers submitted for each year's conference and the number receiving approval, we will be able to assess our effectiveness in leading graduate students toward effective research and writing. This success rate will be tabulated and kept in the Department's files for longterm assessment of our success in training and mentoring students. We feel that this measure represents a direct assessment of our effectiveness, provided by peers in our field.

A second direct measure of graduate student effectiveness is success rates in each of two areas: grants for study in Scandinavia and juried publications. Graduate students have access to three main sources of funding for study in Scandinavia: the Fulbright program, the grants administered by the American Scandinavian Foundation, and the Foreign Languages and Area Studies fellowships offered by the US government via our university's European Studies Center. One further field-specific source of funding is the Birgit Baldwin Fellowship for Graduate Research, administered by the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study. By tracking our students' application rate and successes in these grant programs, we can gain a measure of the effectiveness of our professional training of our students in the field. Juried publication of graduate student research, as well as publication of texts that graduate students have translated, represent a further source of assessment data regarding our training of graduate students. We are compiling and archiving this data for periodic analysis, e.g., in preparation for our next ten-year review.

In sum, then, we have developed several new measures for assessing our success in carrying out our mission and we continue to make good use of the ones established in 1996. Our goal is to remain one of the finest departments of our kind in the country and to contribute effectively to our field, university community and society.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. DuBois
Chair,
Department of Scandinavian Studies

DEPARTMENT OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES

College of Letters and Science University of Wisconsin-Madison

PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

October 1996, updated May 2006

Introduction

In response to a request from the College of Letters and Science, the Scandinavian Department developed a plan of assessment for its graduate program. Depending upon the results, this plan may change in the future.

This plan involves the four steps laid out by the College of Letters and Science:

1. A clear and precise articulation of the educational goals and objectives for the Scandinavian Studies graduate curriculum.
2. The identification and description of instruments or methods for assessing student achievement at important stages of their studies.
3. The development of a feedback mechanism so that the results of the instruments and methods described in step 2 are used for improvement of our instruction.
4. The establishment of a timetable for achieving the previous three steps.

Establishing assessment procedures in the Scandinavian Department is facilitated by the modest size of the program (currently 3.5 FTE). We tend to know each of our graduate students personally, and information about necessary changes to the program are disseminated quickly.

The current plan was first drafted by the Chair, Susan Brantly, and subsequently reviewed and amended by the graduate faculty. Adoption of the plan was voted on in a meeting held October 24, 1996. The plan passed unanimously. The updated plan was voted on in a meeting held May 10, 2006. The plan passed unanimously.

We have also submitted a separate, though similar plan for assessment of the Scandinavian Studies undergraduate major.

MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

Educational Goals and Objectives

The Scandinavian Department offers Masters Degrees in Scandinavian literature, philology, and area studies. Common to all three degree programs are the following *basic skills goals* :

1. Advanced competency in a modern Scandinavian language. Students should be able to discuss, understand, read and write about the topic of their area of specialization in their target language. If their target language is Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish, then the M.A. student should be able to read texts in the other two languages. If their target language is Finnish, the student should also show a competence in written Swedish.
2. A reading knowledge of a second language for research purposes.
3. The ability to read critically and independently about Scandinavian Studies.
4. The ability to communicate clearly ideas through both written documents and oral presentations.
5. The ability to formulate hypotheses for research, based on reading, observing, and thinking.

The following are the *basic areas of knowledge* specifically relating to each field:

Literature

1. A basic familiarity with issues of Scandinavian languages and history.
2. A general knowledge of the Scandinavian literary canon and issues of literary history.
3. A basic knowledge of Old Norse
4. A familiarity with research and bibliographic methods within Scandinavian literary studies.
5. Specific knowledge of a chosen area of specialization.

Philology

1. A basic familiarity with Scandinavian languages and literature.
2. Knowledge of general philological methods, including paleography and language history.
3. A solid knowledge of Old Norse.
4. A familiarity with research methods and bibliography within Scandinavian philology.
5. Specialized knowledge in an area of Scandinavian philology.

Area Studies

1. A basic familiarity with issues of Scandinavian languages and literature.

2. A general knowledge of Scandinavian history and contemporary political issues.
3. A basic knowledge of European history
4. A familiarity with research methods and bibliography within Scandinavian area studies.
5. Specific knowledge of a chosen area of specialization.

Currently, these are the goals implicit in the design of the degree programs for each special field.

A copy of the requirements for the Scandinavian Master's Degree is appended to this document.

Instruments and Methods for Assessment

The current Master's program already contains methods of assessing whether or not students are attaining the goals listed above.

Advanced competency in the student's target language is assessed when that student answers one of the essay questions on the Master's exam in target language. A reading knowledge of a second language is generally determined by university administered competency exams, and in special cases by other means (an undergraduate major in the pertinent foreign language or advanced classes passed in the language in question.)

The scope of the student's knowledge of their field and their area of specialization is thoroughly tested during the comprehensive written and oral exam.

An exit interview assesses students' experiences of the graduate program. A copy of the exit interview questionnaire is appended to this document.

Two further indirect measures of student success are gathered for longitudinal study:

1. A tabulation of all students applying for permission to present a paper at the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, along with a record of the number of successful vs. failed applications.
2. A tabulation of all students applying for FLAS, Fulbright, or American Scandinavian Foundation grants along with a record of the number of successful vs. failed applications.

The Feedback Mechanism

The results of these assessments are reviewed each year by the Graduate advisor and reported to the Graduate Faculty Committee. The Graduate Faculty Committee then discusses the findings and any possible changes to curriculum these findings might imply. The College will be informed of any significant changes to our educational goals

or curriculum.

These reports will be submitted during the periodic ten year reviews of the Department conducted by the College.

PH.D PROGRAM

Educational Goals and Objectives

The Scandinavian Department offers a Ph.D. in Scandinavian Studies, with tracks in both literature and philology. We do not offer a Ph.D. track in Area Studies. We expect Ph.D. candidates to possess the basic skills outlined for the Master's Degree program. *The basic skills goals* in addition to those expected for the Master's Degree are as follows:

1. Either minimal satisfactory competency in German and another Scandinavian language or advanced competency in German or another Scandinavian language approved by the department.
2. A reading knowledge of Old Norse.

The *basic areas of knowledge* required for the Ph.D. are as follows.

1. Detailed knowledge of the literature of one Scandinavian country and general knowledge of the literature of the other Scandinavian countries.
2. Familiarity with the history and structure of the Scandinavian languages.
3. Orientation in the history and institutions of the Scandinavian countries.
4. Familiarity with a field related to Scandinavian literature, represented by the minor.

Currently, these are the goals implicit in the design of the program.

A copy of the requirements for the Ph.D. in Scandinavian literature is appended to this document.

The current Ph.D. program already contains methods of assessing whether or not students are attaining the goals listed above.

Students who complete a Master's within the department are assessed for admission to the doctoral program at the time of their Master's examination. The assessment is based on their grades to date, preparation, and exam performance. Students wishing to enter the doctoral program with a Master's from another institution must normally pass a qualifying examination during their first year in the doctoral program.

A student's competency in their research languages is generally determined by university administered competency exams, and in special cases by other means (an undergraduate major in the pertinent foreign language or advanced classes passed in the language in question.)

The scope of the student's knowledge of their field and their area of specialization is thoroughly tested during the preliminary examination.

Our primary means of assessing our students' experiences of our graduate program is an exit interview. A copy of the exit interview questionnaire is appended to this document.

Two further indirect measures of student success are gathered for longitudinal study:

1. A tabulation of all students applying for permission to present a paper at the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, along with a record of the number of successful vs. failed applications.
2. A tabulation of all students applying for FLAS, Fulbright, or American Scandinavian Foundation grants along with a record of the number of successful vs. failed applications.

The Feedback Mechanism

The results of these assessments are reviewed each year by the Graduate advisor and reported to the Graduate Faculty Committee. The Graduate Faculty Committee discusses the findings and any possible changes to curriculum these findings might imply. The College will be informed of any significant changes to our educational goals or curriculum.

These will be submitted during the periodic ten year reviews of the Department conducted by the College.

DEPARTMENT OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES

College of Letters and Science University of Wisconsin-Madison

PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

October 1996

Introduction

In response to a request of the College of Letters and Science, the Scandinavian Department has developed the attached assessment procedures for its undergraduate major. Depending upon the results, this plan may change in the future.

This plan involves the four steps laid out by the College of Letters and Science:

1. A clear and precise articulation of the educational goals and objectives for the Scandinavian Studies major.
2. The identification and description of instruments or methods for assessing student achievement at important stages of the program.
3. The development of a feedback mechanism so that the results of the instruments and methods described in step 2 are used for improvement of our undergraduate major.
4. The establishment of a timetable for achieving the previous three steps.

Establishing assessment procedures in the Scandinavian Department is facilitated by the modest size of the program (currently 3.5 FTE). We tend to know each of our undergraduates personally, and information about necessary changes to the program are disseminated quickly and efficiently.

The current plan was first drafted by the Chair, Susan Brantly, and subsequently reviewed and amended by the faculty. Adoption of the plan was voted on in a meeting held October 24, 1996. The plan passed unanimously.

We will also submit a separate, though similar plan for assessment of the Scandinavian Studies graduate program.

Educational Goals and Objectives

In general, the Scandinavian Department sees itself as actively striving to the mission of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the most relevant part of that mission being that

the University must strengthen cultural understanding through opportunities to study languages, cultures, the arts, and the implications of social, political, economic, and technological change and through

encouragement of study, research, and service off campus and abroad.

It is common for our students to be double majors, often combining a Scandinavian Studies major with one in International Relations, History, or even a pre-med curriculum. A number of undergraduate majors are drawn to the field by a basic interest in Scandinavia, but will move on to careers only tangentially related to Scandinavian Studies. A dedicated few will continue on to graduate studies in Scandinavian Studies. We feel that the Scandinavian Studies curriculum possesses sufficient breadth and depth to serve both those who are seeking an enriched liberal arts education and those who are preparing for graduate school.

The *basic skills goals* we expect of all our student are:

1. A basic proficiency in a Scandinavian language, corresponding to the "advanced" level of the ACTFL Guidelines (attached as an appendix). A student with "advanced" is supposed to be 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.

2. A proficiency in writing the English language.
3. The ability to read critically.

We consider these basic skills not only essential for a successful graduate career, but extremely important in almost any professional context.

The *basic areas of knowledge* that an undergraduate major in Scandinavian Studies should touch upon are:

1. Knowledge of some of the basic scholarly issues in Scandinavian medieval studies or linguistics.
2. Basic knowledge of Scandinavian history or contemporary political issues.
3. Knowledge of important aspects of Scandinavian literary history.

Currently, the credits required for the Scandinavian major are distributed according to these three fields of knowledge. These three fields represent the various directions that a graduate career in Scandinavian Studies might take. The idea is that undergraduates should acquire a general acquaintance with all three field options within Scandinavian studies, and focus their attentions on the field they are most likely to pursue.

A copy of the requirements for the Scandinavian major are attached as an appendix to this report.

Instruments and Methods for Assessment

The Scandinavian Department understands that this assessment program is not meant to evaluate individual students or faculty, but to assess whether or not our undergraduate program is achieving the goals we think it should.

In addition to the instruments listed below, it should be noted that the relatively small size of our program enables us to monitor the progress of our majors with close attention which would be impossible in a larger program.

1. Embedded testing

A Scandinavian major requires the equivalent of 5 semesters of study in the student's target language. In order to ascertain whether our students are achieving a proficiency equivalent to "Advanced" by their fifth semester, we will experiment with an embedded testing exercise. The instructors of the 5th semester language courses will assign the same essay question (What is your favorite book or film and why?) to all of their students, approximately 10 weeks into the semester. Such a question should invite students to use complex sentence structure, tell a narrative, and compose reasoned arguments, if they are able. These essays will be reviewed each year by a department representative.

2. Certification of Proficiency in Expository English in the Major

Since every major takes a literature course, it is built into our major that they will receive extensive writing instruction. Within that framework. This component of the major will be assessed via grading and by periodic selection and comparison of term papers from different courses.

3. Exit Interview

We feel fairly confident that the design of our courses and our undergraduate major provides our students with the basic skills and knowledge that they need to progress on to graduate school. Up till now, we have had no means of monitoring what the students think of their overall program, apart from volunteered comments. For this reason, we will begin to conduct exit interviews of our graduating seniors. To begin with, we will try sending out questionnaires via email, but if the response rate is too low we will investigate other options. A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this report as an appendix.

The Feedback Mechanism

The results of these assessments will be reviewed each year by the Chair and reported to the Curriculum Committee. The Committee will then discuss the findings and any possible changes to curriculum these findings might imply. The College will be informed of any significant changes in our educational goals or curriculum. These yearly reports will be submitted during the periodic ten year reviews

of the Department conducted by the College.

Timetable for Implementation

During the Fall 1996 semester, the Department will begin implementing the assessment procedures listed above. Since we have several majors graduating in December, we should begin to get a preliminary idea of what kind of data we can expect.