

**DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

College of Letters & Science  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

April 28, 2006

TO: Gary Sandefur, Dean  
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FROM: Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, Chair

RE: **PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN**  
(updated 2006)

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures regularly provides instruction for undergraduate and graduate students in Russian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, and Czech language, literature and culture. We occasionally offer courses in other Slavic languages and cultures as well, and cross-list a number of our courses in other programs, including Literature-in-Translation, Folklore, Jewish Studies, Women's Studies, Theatre & Drama, and Religious Studies. These courses are open to all university students, whether majoring in one of our programs, fulfilling general education requirements (including language requirements), pursuing personal interests, or satisfying requirements in other degree or certificate programs (see <http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/>).

Please note that the assessment plan for our undergraduate Russian program is the most elaborate, developed over a number of years by Professor Ben Rifkin and in conjunction with his research program in SLA and his previous role as Director of the Russian Language School at Middlebury College. The assessment tools were largely web-based and linked to technology support at Middlebury. Because Professor Rifkin has since left his positions at both Middlebury and the UW-Madison, we are in the process of further revising our assessment plan to de-couple it from the Middlebury system.

The following plan includes assessment plans for all of our major degrees:

- 1. BA/BS in Russian**
- 2. BA/BS in Polish**
- 3. MA/PhD in Slavic Languages and Literature**

## 1. ASSESSMENT OF BA/BS in Russian

### Introduction

We offer three tracks for our BA/BS in Russian: Russian Language and Literature; Russian Language and Civilization; and Russian for Native Speakers. See <http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/information/russianrequirements.htm> for specific requirements for each track. In assessing the program, the Department engages in a number of ongoing activities, including records of grades in all its courses, student evaluations of courses and faculty, and so forth. In addition, it assesses its undergraduate major in Russian each Spring through testing at all 4 levels of language training offered; it administers a capstone questionnaire for all students in Slavic 322 (the final semester of our major sequence); and sends a follow-up questionnaire to graduates with a BA/BS in Russian. The data produced by the assessment measures described below are intended to provide the Department with information about successes and about needs for change; it is not intended to evaluate individual students, teaching assistants or faculty.

In 1993, the Department adopted a set of language proficiency goals for students in our undergraduate Russian program. We have not had occasion to alter those goals, although we recognize that without significant in-country experience, it is very difficult for students to achieve a level of fluency above Intermediate-Mid or High on the ACTFL (American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages) scale. Because of this, we encourage all of our majors to participate in a study abroad program in Russia.

SL102 (end of 2<sup>nd</sup>-semester Russian: Sentence-length written and spoken discourse on predictable topics, necessary for survival in the target language culture. Students learn to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations such as providing basic personal information, describing basic objects, expressing preferences and immediate needs.

SL204 (end of 4<sup>th</sup>-semester Russian): Sentence-length written and spoken discourse on topics related to the student (interests, opinions); Goals for listening and reading focused on skimming (gisting) of texts and scanning (for particular details); students encouraged to take linguistic risks for the sake of creative use of the language and to discuss learning strategies and language processing strategies.

SL276 (end of 6<sup>th</sup>-semester Russian): Paragraph-length written and spoken discourse on topics beyond the student him/herself; reading and listening with some textual analysis and recognition of irony.

SL322 (end of 8<sup>th</sup>-semester Russian): Extended (essay-length) written and spoken discourse on topics beyond the student him/herself; listening and reading for detailed textual analysis.

### Instruments and Methods of Assessment

Each fall, all students in all levels take a lexical exam based on a universal minimal vocabulary for learners of Russian. This test is designed to measure lexical loss over the summer, i.e., the degree to which students lose vocabulary between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the fall semester.

In the spring semester, students in first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year Russian take a battery of language exams specifically designed for the purposes of assessing the language program:

- A random sampling of students in all levels participate in oral proficiency interviews.
- Students in second- through fourth-year Russian take tests measuring their grammatical and syntactical competency.
- Students in fourth-year Russian submit samples of their written work for a portfolio maintained by the Slavic Department
- Students in fourth-year Russian complete a survey, answering questions about their own sense of their Russian-language progress at UW-Madison and their satisfaction with the Russian major. A separate survey is sent to alumni of the major three years after graduation (see Appendices 1 and 2.)

### Yearly Assessment Report

Every summer the Russian Language Program Director reviews the data collected in the manner described above and submits a report to the College and the Department, including:

- \* Enrollment Patterns and Number of Majors, including information on students studying abroad in Russia;
- \* List of Awards and Citations earned by our undergraduate majors over the year;
- \* Presentation and Analysis of Data collected: Communicative Competence (based on OPIs); Grammatical Competence; Lexical Competence; and Listening or Reading Competence (in alternating years);
- \* Discussion of Portfolio Samples of Work of 4<sup>th</sup>-year students;
- \* Discussion of Survey of Graduating Seniors and of Follow-up Survey;
- \* Plans for changes in curriculum or pedagogy if the assessment measures indicated that problems exist or changes are needed.
- \* Plans for changes in the measures or methods of assessment used, if necessary.

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF BA/BS IN POLISH

### Introduction

The Polish program at UW-Madison is the oldest B.A.-granting Polish program in the United States. It was established by an act of the state legislature as the Department of Polish in 1935. In 1942, it was expanded into the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature.

The B.A. major in Polish was updated and revitalized in the fall of 2001. Students are required to take: 9 credits in the Polish language beyond Slavic 208 (Fourth Semester Polish); 6 credits in Polish literature taught in translation; 3 credits in Polish literature taught in Polish; 6 credits in Polish and East European Culture and Area Studies. See <http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/polish1.htm> for more information.

We recognize that it is difficult for students who are not heritage speakers to achieve an advanced level of proficiency in Polish. As a result, we encourage our Polish majors to go on study abroad to Poland. They typically go on the UW-Stevens Point or the Kosciuszko Foundation semester- or year-long programs at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow or on the UW-Milwaukee summer program at the Catholic University in Lublin.

### Instruments and Methods of Assessment

The main assessment of Polish majors takes place in SL 302 (Polish literature taught in Polish) since it is typically the last course they take as Polish majors. As of Spring 2006, two written exams in Polish were introduced in SL 302 to assess the Polish majors' proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and stylistic usage.

### Yearly Assessment Report

Every summer the Chair of the Department, in consultation with the Polish faculty and instructors, submits a report to the Dean of the College, together with the Russian major report. This report includes summary information about the assessment, and plans, if any, for changes in the major.

### **3. ASSESSMENT OF MA/PHD IN SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

#### Introduction

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison granted its first MA in 1950 and its first PhD in 1961. We have since become one of the nation's leading doctoral programs in Russian literature, with our graduates filling positions in undergraduate and graduate programs throughout the country and the world. Students who are making satisfactory progress and who have fulfilled the necessary requirements will have the MA degree conferred on request and can be admitted to the PhD program after approval by the faculty. The program leading to the PhD in Slavic Languages and Literature with Russian concentration requires 54 graduate-level credits including 27 credits earned for the MA. We currently do not recruit students for a terminal MA, nor for the concentration in Linguistics. Students are encouraged to complete their minor in Polish or Serbo-Croatian, and all PhD candidates must complete a preliminary examination in Polish, Serbo-Croatian, or Czech literature.

#### Instruments and Methods of Assessment

The Slavic Department does intensive informal and formal assessment of all graduate students at every stage of their graduate careers, as described below. These assessments are reviewed by the faculty and staff at regular intervals, and guarantee that we maintain the academic excellence of our students and of the program itself. The entire faculty gets to know the students well because of the small size of our classes. All incoming students are assigned to our Graduate Advisor, with whom they meet once a semester to plan their courses and assess satisfactory progress. Once a student begins the preliminary examination period, s/he chooses an advisor for the dissertation, and together the two select the remaining members of the PhD committee. Nonetheless, all Russian literature faculty members on campus read the prelims and participate in the oral examination, including the faculty member who supervised the second Slavic language/literature of the student. In addition, all our students serve as teaching assistants and sometimes as projects assistants in the Department, supervised closely by one of our faculty members. The graduate students have offices on the same floor as the professors, and attend the same lectures and present at the same conferences as their professors. Students work closely for three to six years with their dissertation advisors and other members of their dissertation committee. In addition, each Fall we invite back to campus at least two former students (one who has continued in academia and one who has taken a different professional path) to meet graduate students and participate in an annual conference. In this way, we maintain contact with our graduates, and add to the professional development of our current students. Formal assessment tools include:

\* Interruption/Completion questionnaires: Any graduate student who requests a leave of absence, who leaves the program before conferral of the PhD, or who deposits a dissertation with the Graduate School is asked to complete a questionnaire assessing the program (see appendices 3 and 4). These questionnaires are reviewed by the Department and kept on file in the departmental office;

\* Russian Language Competency Exams: All graduate students must pass three out of five competency examinations in Russian (listening, reading, speaking, writing and grammar) before the warrant for the MA may be requested, and all five by the beginning of the fifth semester of residence. The Language Program Director is responsible for administering and grading the exams, and reporting on the results to the Department. Tests are based on proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL); student must demonstrate advanced level skills in order to pass. Proficiency in Russian is one factor used in the determination of teaching assignments.

\* MA Gateway Exercise: Discussion of the progress of continuing graduate students completing the master's degree that semester occurs at the October and March faculty meetings, initiated by the graduate advisor and supported by copies of grade reports and annual letters written to each student, along with other relevant documents. Academic progress to date, teaching experience, language skills, and potential for successful research in the field and eventual job placement in an academic setting are considered. Any student who receives at least one vote by an Executive Committee member in support of continuation toward the Ph.D. will be encouraged to fulfill remaining course and credit requirements (including courses toward the Ph.D. minor, seminars, and other required courses) and continue forward to preliminary examinations and the writing and defense of a dissertation.

\* PhD Preliminary Examinations: No later than the eighth semester of residence, students must pass written examinations comprised of four parts, offered each October and February. The written exams are followed at the end of the semester by an oral exam and a dissertation proposal defense.

\* Yearly progress reports: The Graduate Advisor (GA) monitors the satisfactory progress of all pre-dissertators, reviewing each student's file, including maintenance of the "MA and Ph.D Degree Worksheet" (see appendix 5). This worksheet lists dates and outcomes for all requirements, including courses, minor, Russian Proficiency exams, French or German Reading Knowledge, warrants, prelims, dissertation committee, and degrees. The GA is responsible for soliciting comments from all faculty and staff members who have taught or supervised pre-dissertators, and compiles a letter on satisfactory progress to the student in the late spring of each year (see appendix 6).

\* Yearly letters to dissertators: Dissertation advisors are responsible for writing a letter each spring assessing satisfactory progress of their advisees. A copy is kept in the student's file.

#### Yearly Assessment Report to College

The Department files a yearly assessment report to Letters & Science including data on the incoming graduate class, the degrees granted, and the post-graduation plans and accomplishments of our students. The report also summarizes results of the assessments of current student progress, as outlined above.