College of Liberal Arts
Foreign Languages & Literatures
German/German-Int. Trade, BA

Expected Outcome 1: Ability to identify and explain cultural contexts
Graduating students will be able to recall cultural events, people, topics, and identify and interpret their relevance for German-speaking societies.

Assessment Method 1: Written samples

Assessment Method Description
Students submit written samples of their work as part of the Capstone requirement. These samples include at least two cultural topics (i.e. current events and issues discussed in the civilization, film, literature or special topics courses), and, in the case of the International Trade students, two business related topics. Faculty evaluate the samples based on rubrics and a scale ranging from 1 to 4 (indicating does not meet expectations, almost meets expectations, meets expectations, and exceeds expectations).

Based on discussion following last year’s assessment, students were also required to write a brief summary/synopsis of a newspaper article covering a current events topic relevant to German-speaking countries. Students write these mini-essays as part of the general exit interview in a proctored setup for further assessment of their understanding of their cultural understanding.

There are no standardized ACTFL guidelines for culture as there are for oral and written competency.

The faculty nevertheless values this Student Learning Outcome: a survey of regional U.S.-based German companies conducted by two faculty members as well as a survey of Alumni and Alumnae as part of a departmental program review revealed the importance on a deeper understanding of the target culture for these constituents; recognition of cultural differences and intercultural competence were regarded as highly for successfully operating in the target culture as linguistic competence.

The following individual rubrics were used for evaluation, see attached faculty evaluation form (Culture.Evaluation):
- Recall and identification
- Analysis of meaning and context
Interpretation of relevance

Findings
The faculty evaluated the samples in respect to cultural content, analysis, and interpretation, while disregarding as far as possible linguistic accuracy. Eight students (including one Trade student) were evaluated. Analysis of the scores for individual rubrics of the faculty evaluation sheet revealed both a strength and a weakness – see spreadsheet attached as word document (Analysis.Culture.Samples) Average score in rubric:

- Recall and identification: 3.75
- Analysis of meaning and context: 3.6
- Interpretation of relevance: 3.4

While students demonstrated excellent familiarity with cultural contexts overall, some also lacked specificity when asked to interpret their broader meaning, significance in more detail; and even more so, when asked to interpret its relevance in a broader socio-political context.

How did you use findings for improvement?
Students are required to focus on detailed description of the topic and interpretation of meaning within a broader (historical-cultural) context (e.g. several currency devaluations in the 20th century and its impact on the German psyche even today) both in relevant papers and presentations. Emphasis continues to be placed on comparing and contrasting students own culture with salient aspects of the target culture to augment the latter's critical examination.

General: the civilization course sequence is to be offered at least every other year, there is continuation of extracurricular cultural activities such as the Fall film series, the biweekly conversation table, which enhance student acquisition of customs of the target culture.

Additional Comments
The Capstone now includes interpretation of a newspaper article about current events which students will read and write about in a proctored setting. Students are interested in cultural topics as indicated by highly favorable student comments about the culture course offered in the summer abroad program in Vienna as well as the popularity of the Spring semester Cinema course which uses film as a vehicle to arrive at a more profound understanding of the target culture, its history, political and societal structures.

Assessment Method 2: Exit interview with undergraduate director

Assessment Method Description
Students undergo a 30 to 45 minute long exit interview. The interview includes questions about culture, history and society of German-speaking countries. The questions are attached as word document
(Culture.Questionnaire). Students are asked to identify events, dates, people and comment and interpret their relevance for German-speaking societies today. The responses reveal student competence in the subject matter through recall as well as interpretation of meaning and explanation of relevance for German-speaking societies today. The questions are posted as a word document on the Capstone course site in Canvas but, during the interview, students have to listen carefully to the interlocutor and respond freely without notes.

The following individual rubrics were used for evaluation, resembling the rubrics in assessment method 1 – for the faculty evaluation form (Culture.Evaluation) see attachment under assessment method 1:

- Recall and identification
- Analysis of meaning and context
- Interpretation of relevance

Findings

The undergraduate director’s evaluation focused on recall and description as well as explanation of the cultural content raised by the questions, while disregarding as far as possible linguistic accuracy. Eight students (including one Trade student) were evaluated. Analysis of the scores for individual rubrics of the faculty evaluation form, resembled – although slightly lower overall – findings with assessment method 1, and revealed a weakness in the interpretation component in particular – see spreadsheet attached as word document (Analysis.Culture.Samples).

Average score in rubric:

- Recall and identification 3.6
- Analysis of meaning and context 3.5
- Interpretation of relevance 3.2

While students demonstrated very good to excellent familiarity with cultural contexts overall, some lacked specificity when asked to interpret their broader meaning in more detail; one student in particular was not able to meet expectations when asked to interpret the relevance of an identified subject, thus bringing down the overall score by a wider margin than in assessment method 1.

How did you use findings for improvement?

Students are required to focus on detailed description of the topic and interpretation of meaning within a broader (historical-cultural) context (e.g. several currency devaluations in the 20th century and its impact on the German psyche even today) both in relevant papers and presentations. Emphasis continues to be placed on comparing and contrasting students own culture with salient aspects of the target culture to augment the latter’s critical examination.

General: the civilization course sequence is to be offered at least every other year, there is continuation of extracurricular cultural activities such
as the Fall film series, the biweekly conversation table, which enhance student acquisition of customs of the target culture.

**Additional Comments**

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**Expected Outcome 2: Competence in oral communication**

Graduating students will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.

**Assessment Method 1:** Oral samples

**Assessment Method Description**

Students make voice recordings of both a prepared text and extemporaneous speech. Faculty evaluate the students' samples both for linguistic accuracy (particularly in the prepared text) and level of proficiency (especially in the extemporaneous recording). The rubrics used to determine level of student proficiency follow the guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. These standardized rubrics are nationally and internationally recognized by my major corporations and government agencies, and are also aligned with evaluations of government agencies. They include detailed descriptions of what students must be able to **tell, discuss, interpret, examine, formulate and argue** in the target language to demonstrate the respective proficiency level. Complete guidelines are available at: [http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf)

The individual guidelines for SPEAKING are attached as pdf file (ACTFL.Speaking).

Based on the ACTFL guidelines, faculty evaluation sheets (attached as Speaking.Evaluation) provided the rubrics:

- **Language/Vocabulary**
- **Time frame**
- **Topics/Structure**
- **Pronunciation/Comprehensibility**

including descriptors of what is expected on a scale from 1 to 6 (1 resembling the Intermediate-low proficiency level, 6 advanced-high). This methodological choice is based on the fact that the average foreign language graduate, proficiency-wise, tends to operate on the intermediate-high level. Hence, both the Novice level (goal of a two
year curriculum) as well as the Superior (and Distinguished) level were not included on the scale; it should be noted the majority of the population of any target language neither operates on the Superior nor, of course, the Distinguished level, but rather on the advanced level.

- Analysis.CultureDimension.2014
- Analysis.SpeakingDimensions.2014
- Analysis.WritingDimension.2014
- Culture.Evaluation
- Speaking.Evaluation
- Writing.Evaluation

Findings
Seven participants for German (GR) and 1 for International Trade (IT) submitted their recordings. Review of the student samples revealed a wider spread of overall student proficiency than usual, which was mainly due to one underperforming student:
4 students were ranked intermediate high to advanced-low
2 intermediate-high
1 intermediate-mid
1 intermediate-low
Analysis of the individual scores for the rubrics on the faculty evaluation sheet revealed some common strengths and one weakness in particular – see spreadsheet attached as word document (Analysis.Speaking.Samples)
Average score in rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language/Vocabulary</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time frame</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics/Structure</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation/Comprehensibility</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the descriptors for the individual rubrics are interrelated and students should thus score in the general range of the respective proficiency level, the spread of the four dimensions used is seemingly narrow. Nevertheless, consistent use of correct tenses for expression of time frames in narration was found to be a weakness while pronunciation and overall comprehensibility were satisfactory overall. The higher performing students operated with relative ease and solid pronunciation while reading and speaking freely on a chosen topic. These students also had study abroad experiences. The students on the intermediate-high and -mid proficiency level demonstrated expression that will generally be understood by a native speaker. They were able to narrate successfully in the past most of the time; they spoke in paragraphs as well, a good deal of the time. However, they were not consistent, and as such not able to perform at this
level all of the time. The main areas of weakness remain the ability to use past time frames and the use of connector words to create smoother transitions. The students who spent more time in a German-speaking country, however, had a better grasp of the use of dependent word order which gives the speaker a more native-like quality. Thus, we have decided that, in addition to the increased attention to the past tenses that we give throughout the curriculum, we will add a focus on transitional elements and dependent word order in the upper-level content courses. The students need more opportunities, both rehearsed and unrehearsed, to develop the ability to narrate something that happened in the past in nicely formed paragraphs.

How did you use findings for improvement?
In addition to the increased attention to the past tenses that we give throughout the curriculum (see below), we will add a focus on transitional elements and dependent word order in the upper-level content courses. The students need more opportunities, both rehearsed and unrehearsed, to develop the ability to narrate something that happened in the past in nicely formed paragraphs. Starting at the 1020-level, courses will continue to emphasize review of tenses both as a grammatical structures as well as concrete application in simple retelling of readings in major time frames. There is also continuing emphasis on role plays and requiring students to memorize dialogues in order to internalize structures in various time frames through repetitive incorporation in their own speech.

General: The section encourages study abroad to foster and deepen application of all communicative skills. Students are also advised to participate in Stammtisch, the bi-weekly conversation table: all students attending are encouraged to use the target language, regardless of their skill level.

Additional Comments
Combining the Assessment of the two degrees, German and German International Trade, proved to be sensible, with only one student graduating in Academic Year 2013-2014. As explained in the 2012-2013 Assessment, the curriculum of the German component of the Trade degree is identical to the “straight” German major except for the two courses focusing on German for Business (Business German I and II); however, given the limited number of upper level courses for German majors, almost all of these majors enroll in at least one of the Business courses also; from a curricular point of view this is desirable, since it exposes all students to learn and practice more business- and job-related writing, including composition of resumes
Assessment Method 2: Exit interview with undergraduate director

Assessment Method Description
Students undergo a 30 to 45 minute long exit interview. The interview includes
a) questions about culture, history and society of the German-speaking countries; students are asked to identify events, dates, people and comment and interpret their relevance for German-speaking societies today. In the case of the International Trade students the questions also include business related questions. The responses reveal student competence in the subject matter through recall as well as level of linguistic proficiency in communicating their fact-based knowledge. The interview
b) also evaluates students' oral proficiency by tailoring questions that require students to perform tasks that reflect the various proficiency levels and sublevels (from Novice to Advanced and Superior) of the standard ACTFL guidelines (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

The rubrics for evaluation are identical to those used in Assessment Method 1:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language/Vocabulary</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time frame</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics/Structure</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation/Comprehensibility</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

including descriptors of what is expected on a scale from 1 to 6 (1 resembling the Intermediate-low proficiency level, 6 advanced-high).

Findings
Seven participants for German (GR) and 1 for International Trade (IT) submitted their recordings. Review of the student samples revealed a wider spread of overall student proficiency than usual, which was mainly due to one underperforming student:
4 students were ranked intermediate high to advanced-low
2 intermediate-high
1 intermediate-mid
1 intermediate-low

Analysis of the individual scores for the rubrics on the faculty evaluation sheet revealed some common strengths and one weakness in particular – see spreadsheet attached as word document (Analysis.Speaking.Samples)

Average score in rubric:

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The results were similar to those with assessment method 1: again, consistent use of correct tenses for expression of time frames in narration was found to be a weakness while pronunciation and overall comprehensibility were quite satisfactory overall. The intermediate-high to advanced low students advanced-mid student were able to handle formal (within limits) and informal exchanges about both concrete topics such as family and university life and topics relating to current events and history as presented by the culture questions of the interview. They discussed topics about personal interests with relative ease and in paragraph-length discourse, but demonstrated signs of inconsistent use of time frames and general grammatical mistakes when presented with more challenging, abstract topics about politics and society. The students on the intermediate-high and -mid successfully handled conversing about routine tasks in social situations. Responses to more complicated topics as presented by some of the culture questions were limited to singular sentences and in present tense only. Using less connected discourse, interpretation and examination of the topics were thus presented less cohesively; however, all students were able to handle uncomplicated communicative tasks for social situations which do not require operating in different time frames.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
In addition to the increased attention to the past tenses that we give throughout the curriculum (see below), we will add a focus on transitional elements and dependent word order in the upper-level content courses. The students need more opportunities, both rehearsed and unrehearsed, to develop the ability to narrate something that happened in the past in nicely formed paragraphs. Starting at the 1020-level, courses will continue to emphasize review of tenses both as a grammatical structures as well as concrete application in simple retelling of readings in major time frames. There is also continuing emphasis on role plays and requiring students to memorize dialogues in order to internalize structures in various time frames through repetitive incorporation in their own speech.

**Additional Comments**
N/A
Expected Outcome 3: Competence in writing
Graduating students demonstrate proficiency in written German

Assessment Method 1: Written samples

Assessment Method Description
Students submit written samples of their work as part of the Capstone requirement. The samples consist of a variety of papers from different upper level course work, total at least five to seven page, and include 2 culture and/or business-related samples.
The rubrics used to determine level of student proficiency follow the guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. These standardized rubrics are nationally and internationally recognized by my major corporations and are aligned with evaluations of government agencies. These rubrics list detailed descriptions of what students must be able to interpret, examine, formulate and argue in the target language to demonstrate the respective proficiency level. Complete guidelines are available at: http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf
The individual guidelines for SPEAKING are attached as pdf file (ACTFL.Writing)

Based on the ACTFL guidelines, faculty evaluation sheets (attached as Writing.Evaluation) provided the following rubrics for assessment:

- Vocabulary
- Time frame
- Function/Structure
- Comprehensibility

including descriptors of what is expected on a scale from 1 to 6 (1 resembling the Intermediate-low proficiency level, 6 advanced-high). This methodological choice is based on the fact that the average foreign language graduate, proficiency-wise, tends to operate on the intermediate-high level. Hence, both the Novice level (goal of a two year curriculum) as well as the Superior (and Distinguished) level were not included on the scale. It should be noted the majority of the population of any target language does not operate on the Superior or above level, but rather on the various degrees of the advanced level.

Findings
8 participants (7 German and 1 German Trade) submitted writing samples. Review and evaluation of the student samples for general grammatical correctness and overall linguistic accuracy revealed differences in student proficiency which were similar to the findings for their oral communicative skills.
4 students were ranked intermediate high to advanced-low
2 intermediate-high
1 intermediate-mid
1 intermediate-low
A more detailed analysis of the scores for individual rubrics of the faculty evaluation sheet revealed both a strength and a weakness – see spreadsheet attached as word document (Analysis.Speaking.Samples).

Average score in rubric:

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The students on the intermediate high to advanced low level composed narratives with overall correct usage of the major time frames; sentences on specific topics were linked into fairly cohesive paragraphs; however, they were by no means flawless. The other students’ samples met general practical writing needs such as messages, lacked the cohesion of linked sentences of the more advanced students.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

Writing modules have been in the first and second year sequence and students on all levels of instruction are provided with plenty of opportunity for revision. In the upper levels, students will now receive more writing assignments that focus on developing their ability to relate an event reliably in the past tense, with paragraph length discourse – using appropriate transitions and dependent word order. In addition, attempts are made to strengthen their ability to integrate more abstract tasks, i.e. hypothesize and support opinions with evidence into their writing. Hence, they are given tasks that are scaffold-like, i.e. while using a content area that the students are already familiar with and have spoken/written about in different time frames, they are asked to write persuasive essays in which they have to take a stance on a particular issue.

**Additional Comments**

Based on the perceived success of the newly required essay about a culture or business related current events topic in this year’s Capstone, students will, in the next assessment cycle, have to compose a proctored essay, or rather shorter paragraph-length essays about several topics that will prompt them to use a variety of styles and structural features. These mini-essays are intended to provide a more focused and precise tool, specifically tailored for assessment.