2012-2013 Assessment Report  
Program: Spanish, MHS

College of Liberal Arts  
Foreign Languages & Literatures  
Spanish, MHS

**Expected Outcome 1: Hispanic Cultural Knowledge.**  
Graduating MHS students will understand the major literary and cultural movements in the Spanish-speaking world as well as the current trends in Hispanic Linguistics, and be able to analyze them at a minimum advanced low level by ACTFL standards.

**Assessment Method 1:** Comprehensive Written Examination.

**Assessment Method Description**  
Each MHS student was evaluated based on his/her performance on the written comprehensive examinations. There are ten different sections, each related to all genres of Spanish Peninsular Literature (from the Medieval period to the present day), Spanish American Literature (from the Colonial period to the present day), as well as the major areas of Hispanic Linguistics (i.e. History of the Spanish Language, Dialectology, Second Language Acquisition, Syntax, and Phonetics). Of these ten areas, MHS students eliminated four if they earned an A or a B on courses related to the areas. Thus, they were examined on six areas. The exams were administered, as usual, on Tuesday and Thursday of the ninth week of the semester, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Students had 1 hour and 30 minutes to finish each section of the exam.

**Findings**  
Eight students took the exams. There was a wide variety of performance on the first exam attempt: 2 students failed a majority of the sections and 2 students failed 1-2 sections, and 4 students passed all of their sections on the first attempt. Only 2 students did not pass enough of the sections on the retakes and were required to delay their graduation one semester. Mostly the failure rate is directly tied to poor content knowledge rather than language competency. The quality of the written expression was not dependent upon the
How did you use findings for improvement?
We created a content knowledge rubric for the exam (attached). For the written communication skills in Spanish, we now can evaluate the exams based on a detailed grading rubric designed following the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages guideline. Next year we will begin showing results of student written expression on comprehensive exams. This will allow us to assess the level of written expression more accurately.

We also provided two workshops in preparation for the exam --one on test-writing skills and the other on approaching the content. Also faculty members contributed advice for an orientation manual, detailing their philosophy of the exam, primary and secondary source materials, as well as practical study and test-taking tip.

Additional Comments
The structure and efficacy of the exam is still very much in debate amongst our faculty. We are making an effort to better track statistically the outcome of the exam and to marry it better with our graduate curriculum.

Assessment Method 2: Oral Interview and Recording.

Assessment Method Description
Students submit an oral recording of spontaneous speech in Spanish over the subject of their choice. They engage in a sight-reading exercise in which they are asked to perform a cold reading of an unknown text in Spanish and engage in prompted conversation about the subject.

Findings
All of the students can speak widely and at length on topics related to the Hispanic world. The profundity of students' responses was not necessarily in correlation to their level of contact with the Spanish language or the Hispanic community.

How did you use findings for improvement?
For the most part, we are pleased with this outcome.

**Additional Comments**
None

**Expected Outcome 2: Spoken Spanish Language Skills.**
Graduating MHS students will demonstrate competence in oral communication in Spanish at a minimum level of advanced low, using the standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The ACTFL writing standards are: distinguished; superior; advanced high, mid, and low; intermediate high, mid, and low; and novice high, mid, and low.

**Assessment Method 1:** Oral Interview and Recording.

**Assessment Method Description**
All new students for the academic year 2012-2013 submitted an oral recording of spontaneous speech in Spanish over the subject of their choice, approximately five minutes long. They engaged in a sight-reading exercise in which they are asked to perform a cold reading of an unknown text in Spanish and engage in prompted conversation about the subject. A follow up to this exercise at the end of the program is not required.

**Findings**
All of the students can speak widely and at length on topics related to the Hispanic world. The depth of student responses was not necessarily in correlation to their level of contact with the Spanish language and the Hispanic community. However, we realize that these results are not actionable. Therefore, we are working on a rubric to evaluate this next year. This will allow us to assess the level of written expression more accurately.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
For the most part, we are pleased with this outcome, but we need to measure results with a rubric.

**Additional Comments**
**Expected Outcome 3: Written Spanish Language Skills.**

Graduating MHS students will communicate coherently in written Spanish at a minimum level of advanced low, using the standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The ACTFL writing standards are: distinguished; superior; advanced high, mid, and low; intermediate high, mid, and low; and novice high, mid, and low.

**Assessment Method 1: Comprehensive Written Examination.**

**Assessment Method Description**

Each MHS student was evaluated based on his/her performance on the written comprehensive examinations. There are ten different sections, each related to all genres of Spanish Peninsular Literature (from the Medieval period to the present day), Spanish American Literature (from the Colonial period to the present day), as well as the major areas of Hispanic Linguistics (i.e. History of the Spanish Language, Dialectology, Second Language Acquisition, Syntax, and Phonetics). Of these ten areas, MHS students eliminated four if they earned an A or a B on courses related to the areas. Thus, they were examined on six areas. The exams were administered, as usual, on Tuesday and Thursday of the ninth week of the semester, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Students had 1 hour and 30 minutes to finish each section of the exam.

**Findings**

Eight MHS students took the comprehensive exams. There was a wide variety of performance on the first exam attempt: 2 students failed a majority of the sections and 2 students failed 1-2 sections, and 4 students passed all of their sections on the first attempt. Only 2 students did not pass enough of the sections on the retakes and were required to delay their graduation one semester. Mostly the failure rate is directly tied to poor content knowledge rather than language competency.

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

We have created a grading rubric for the exam that separates content
knowledge from written expression (both written expression and content knowledge rubrics are attached). We now can evaluate the exams based on a detailed grading rubric designed following the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages guideline. We will begin showing results of student written expression on comprehensive exams using the new rubric in the 2013 report, so we can better ascertain at what level of writing they are.

### Rubric: Content Knowledge

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 1     | Demonstrates unacceptable knowledge of the subject matter through production of work that fails to meet established standards. Responses to posed questions:  
- show lack of insight or original thinking  
- exhibit numerous or substantial errors in interpreting disciplinary readings  
- do not incorporate analysis or synthesis of central concepts of the subject  
- reflect no understanding or inaccurate understanding of the nature of the discipline and its links to other disciplines  
- fail to provide supporting details or examples  
- rely on vague generalities and clichés |
| 2     | Demonstrates minimal knowledge of the subject matter through production of work that meets some established standards. Responses to posed question:  
- show minimal evidence of insight or original thinking  
- exhibit some errors in interpreting disciplinary readings  
- incorporate minimal analysis and synthesis of central concepts of the subject  
- reflect vague understanding of the nature of the discipline and its links to other disciplines  
- provide few details and examples  
- exhibit substantial reliance on vague generalities and clichés |
| 3     | Demonstrates acceptable knowledge of the subject matter through production of work that meets established standards. Responses to posed questions:  
- show some insight, creativity, and original thinking  
- exhibit reasonable interpretation of disciplinary readings  
- incorporate some analysis and synthesis of central concepts of the subject  
- reflect some understanding of the nature of the discipline and its links to other disciplines  
- provide some detail and specific examples  
- have few vague generalities and clichés |
| 4     | Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the subject matter through production of work that goes beyond established standards. Responses to posed questions:  
- are highly original and creative  
- exhibit reflective interpretation of disciplinary readings  
- incorporate critical analysis and synthesis of central concepts of the subject  
- reflect a holistic view of the nature of the discipline and its links to other disciplines  
- provide detailed descriptions and numerous specific, vivid examples  
- avoid vague generalities and clichés |

### Rubric: Written Expression

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 1     | Demonstrates unacceptable awareness of formal academic style, treats topic superficially or concretely, and has little awareness of target audience, poor control of grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and symbol production. The writer:  
- relies on lists and notes and limited formulaic structures or basic vocabulary  
- supplies isolated words or phrases without exhibiting understanding of terminology, speech appears copied or reproduced thoughtlessly  
- communicates only basic information in a disorganized manner and without regard to tone or format of academic discourse  
- exhibits major L1 intrusion that disrupts reader and impedes comprehension  
- disregards the need for a hypothesis or fails to support main argument  
- follows a systematic pattern of grammatical errors and a sentence structure marked by non-native patterns  
- provides no transition between ideas or lacks subtopic groupings |
| 2     | Demonstrates minimal awareness of formal academic style, treats topic more abstractly than superficially or concretely, has some awareness of target audience, and with fair control of grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and symbol production. The writer:  
- uses some variety of sentence structures, syntax, and vocabulary  
- exhibits minimal awareness of proper tone and format of academic discourse  
- limits explanation in familiar time frames and aspects  
- exhibits errors that can interfere with comprehension, are systematic, and evidence L1 intrusion  
- presents a taut hypothesis with minimal support of main argument  
- organizes through listing or does not address the context  
- maintains an austere topic control without fully incorporating structure and lexicon to capture ideas and may ignore writing protocols  
- provides few transitions between subtopics with distinctions between principal and secondary ideas, some tangential |
| 3     | Demonstrates some awareness of formal academic style, treats topic both abstractly and concretely with sufficient awareness of target audience and with good control of grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and symbol production. The writer:  
- uses an adequate variety of sentence structures, syntax, and vocabulary  
- exhibits fair awareness of proper tone and format of academic discourse  
- explains complex matters in most time frames and aspects  
- may have errors that do not interfere with comprehension and do not follow a pattern  
- presents and supports opinions with moderately developed arguments and hypotheses  
- attempts to organize ideas without prioritization of importance  
- maintains the thrust of topic through convincing structure and lexicon and adequate use of writing protocols  
- provides some transitions between subtopics with little distinctions between principal and secondary ideas, some tangential |
| 4     | Demonstrates awareness of formal academic style, can treat topic both abstractly and concretely with a strong awareness of target audience and with a high degree of control of grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and symbol production. The writer:  
- uses a broad variety of sentence structures, syntax, and vocabulary  
- exhibits keen awareness of proper tone and format of academic discourse  
- can explain complex matters in all time frames and aspects with ease, non-systematic errors  
- presents and supports opinions by developing cogent arguments and hypotheses  
- organizes and prioritizes ideas  
- maintains the thrust of topic through convincing structure and lexicon and skillful use of writing protocols  
- provides smooth transitions between subtopics and clear distinctions between principal and secondary ideas  
- relates ideas through appropriate orderings (cause = effect, chronology, comparison, etc.) |

### Additional Comments

For assessment purposes, we ask the students to submit a research paper from one of their classes. This allows for comparison between
spontaneous writing and a more careful, student controlled writing situation in which the author would have access to useful resources such as a dictionary or thesaurus and could also more deliberately review grammar and structure. Overall, we are pleased with the MHS students' excellence in written communication.

In addition, we developed a form to demonstrate how well students do in their final papers in all of their classes (attached). Next year we will start using the form for all final papers in all graduate courses. This will allow us to assess the level of written expression more accurately.
RUBRIC FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT WRITING

To be completed for Graduating Seniors during their last semester.

Student Name: _____________________________

MA or MHS Program: _____________________________

The essay is from the course: _____________________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Not Proficient (69% and below)</th>
<th>Proficient (70-89%)</th>
<th>Highly Proficient (90-100%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of MLA style</td>
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<td>Vocabulary (uses a wide variety of words appropriately, and avoids repetition)</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Presents thesis clearly</td>
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<td>Cites pertinent literary/linguistic criticism on the subject</td>
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<td>Organizes the essay into appropriate supporting points and avoids straying off-topic</td>
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<td>Conclusion is based on the argument and is of sufficient scope to be pertinent to the field of study</td>
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