

**Assessment of Masters Candidates
in the Master of Arts in Foreign Language and Literature Program (MAFLL)**

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the MAFLL Program is to provide MA education for the Foreign Language Departments (Foreign Languages and Linguistics' French, Italian, and Comparative Literature; Spanish and Portuguese), by integrating the methodical study of a particular language or literature, or comparative literature, or linguistics, or translation with education in interdepartmental and interdisciplinary approaches. The flexibility and the interdisciplinary nature of the MAFLL program allow students to focus on language and literature as areas of study broader than national or linguistic borders and to study language and literature on a cross-cultural basis. This goal is accomplished by including interdisciplinary seminars in students' plans of study, and allowing electives in a broader area than a single language or literature focus.

Strengths and special features.

The unique strength of MAFLL is included in the Mission Statement above: MAFLL goes beyond a traditional MA in a specific language, and requires interdisciplinary and interdepartmental work of the students, to broaden their outlook. Because of its mixture of general and specific requirements, MAFLL can react to changes in the foreign languages market and in student needs. In the past seven years we have increased the linguistics area of the program and hired faculty members specializing in applied linguistics and second language acquisition in several language areas (Spanish, French, German, Chinese). In 1997 MAFLL added an emphasis on translation (based on the UWM Graduate Certificate Program in Translation), for students interested in a non-academic career using foreign languages. The interdisciplinary nature of MAFLL, and the area of focus on translation, differentiates MAFLL from all other MA programs in foreign language in Wisconsin, which are centered on a single discipline, and usually on literature alone.

The Colloquium Series in Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics provides further exposure to other languages and disciplines. Speakers include visiting scholars and faculty members. The Colloquium also allows students to present their own work to a larger audience and prepared them for presentations at professional conferences.

The MAFLL program collaborates with other units and departments of the University by providing expertise in the area of foreign language and literature to meet their needs and requests. It has implemented dual MAFLL/MLIS degrees, works closely with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education, and with the Linguistics program in the Department of English. These goals are consistent with

UWM goals, and they are appropriate for MAFLL, having been tested in practice for the past twenty-seven years

Recently, the Graduate School adopted a measure allowing the designation of a “concentration” or area of focus on the transcript. A “concentration” is defined as a minimum of 15 credits in a particular area. This designation will highlight the area of expertise of MAFLL graduates to doctoral programs and potential employers. The following concentrations within MAFLL have been approved: Classical Greek, Classics, Comparative Literature, French and Francophone Language, Literature and Culture, German Language, Literature, and Culture, Latin, Linguistics, Spanish and Hispanophone Language, Literature, and Culture, and Translation (English into French; French into English; English into German; German into English; English into Spanish; Spanish into English).

It is now possible for MAFLL students to complete two concentrations for a total of 36 credits (minimum), adding six credits to the nine credits in the related area to form a second concentration of fifteen credits. This option will be particularly useful for secondary school teachers who are often called upon to teach more than one language.

ASSESSMENT:

Outcome 1

- 1) Students will acquire specialized knowledge of the concentration; they will be able to read and analyze materials and to speak and write about the subject with competence in the target language (when appropriate). They will be able to critique texts by applying appropriate critical methodologies.

This knowledge and skills are continually assessed in the individual courses offered by the three language departments. Students are required to participate in discussion, make oral presentations of their work, write one or more papers, and pass exams successfully.

Outcome 2

- 1) Students will acquire a broad interdisciplinary perspective in their area of emphasis: literary studies, language and second language acquisition, linguistics, or translation. They will become familiar with theoretical and methodological approaches in their area of emphasis.

The acquisition of a broad interdisciplinary perspective is assessed in various ways in the MAFLL core seminars, which are usually taught by two professors from different languages or specializations. The assessment

is based on various measures and requirements, depending on nature of the seminar: term papers, portfolios, presentations, group work, exams, etc.

For example: as a result of the perceived needs of graduate students and teaching assistants, the MAFLC program created a “Seminar in Foreign Language Methodology and Pedagogy” which all teaching assistants, as well as students interesting in language teaching as a profession, must take. The seminar allows students to become familiar with second language acquisition issues in several languages. Course work includes developing lesson plans, presenting language module to the class, building a pedagogy portfolio, critiquing presentations. The seminar is offered every fall and is team taught by two faculty members drawn from a pool of seven faculty that specialize in second language acquisition and pedagogy. These instructors meet regularly to assess the aggregate work produced by the students and modify the curriculum and activities in order to strengthen learning experience.

- 2) Success in gaining the knowledge and training will equip students to prepare for various careers and fields requiring a language or literature background.

This is assessed by the written and oral comprehensive exams prepared and graded by an exam committee of three professors. Success may also be assessed by completion of a masters’ thesis or an internship in translation, teaching, or other professional setting using languages.

Example of program-level change: In 2002-3 comprehensive exams taken over several years were reviewed by the MAFLC Coordinating Committee consisting of seven faculty members and two students. It was determined that level of performance was reduced by the format of the exam and its rather short duration (3 hours). After surveying examination formats in other comparable MA programs, the Committee proposed substantial changes to organization of the exam and lengthening it to four hours. MAFLC is now in the process of reviewing aggregate performance on the comprehensive exams and expects that the changes will allow the masters candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and critical skills in a more satisfactory way.

Outcome 3

- 1) At least 75% of MAFLC graduates desiring to be employed will be employed in foreign language education or translation within two years of graduation.

Outcome 4

- 1) At least 75% of MAFLL graduates who apply to doctoral programs in languages, literature, or linguistics will be accepted within five years of graduation.

Assessment tool for outcomes 3 & 4 in progress: We are creating a data base to track the professional and academic paths of MAFLL graduates. We are instituting better ways of keeping in touch and communicating with them. We will gather and discuss suggestions for changes and improvements to the program made by MAFLL graduates, based on their professional experience.

Additional assessment tools that apply to all the outcomes:

MAFLL graduates complete a program evaluation and an exit interview in which they assess to what extent the program has met their academic and professional goals. This will include a questionnaire to measure the success of MAFLL colloquia in exposing students to other disciplines.

The coordinator discussed the outcomes with the MAFLL graduate and presents the results for discussion to the Coordinating Committee, which then makes recommendations. Recommendations for changes to the program based on assessment results are then considered by the entire MAFLL program faculty at the bi-annual meetings.