Assessment Plan  
(October 15, 2010)

Majors:

B.A. in French Language & Literature
B.A. in French Business & Translation
B.A. in German Language & Literature
B.A. in German Business & Translation
B.A. in Spanish Language & Literature
B.A. in Spanish Business & Translation
The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (FLAL) currently offer courses in fifteen languages and undergraduate majors in French, German, and Spanish, each with two emphases. Majors in French, German, and Spanish may also pursue teacher certification. The Major in Russian was unfortunately recently deleted. Minors are available in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Students who wish to pursue further specialization in French or Spanish can enroll in a graduate program leading to the degree of Master of Arts. While FLAL is a strong teaching department with many award-winning teachers, faculty members also maintain active research agendas.

In our state-of-the-art Multimedia Learning Center students can expand their exposure to languages. Students with interest in educational technology can pursue the Foreign Language Instructional Technology Graduate Certificate Program.

Founded in 1972, our Foreign Language Residence Program is one of the oldest in the United States. Students joining this language-immersion program live together with native speakers on a Foreign Language Floor in Douglas Residence Hall. Many of our students also take the opportunity to study abroad, some with support from three competitive departmental scholarships.

Students have the opportunity to participate in a number of interdisciplinary minors in which FLAL is involved: Classical Studies, Comparative Literature, Latino/Latin American Studies, Linguistics, and Southeast Asian Studies.

The six majors in the departments share the assessment and are, therefore, treated here as one unit for this purpose.

**Student Learning Objectives**

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures is involved in the assessment of the educational process to ensure that students receive the best education possible. Graduates of FL&L will be able to communicate successfully in one or more foreign languages in their chosen professional careers. They will also be prepared to enroll in advanced degree programs, to teach at the secondary level, or find employment that takes advantage of their communicative, analytical and critical skills.

Upon completion of a major in Foreign Languages, students will at a minimum attain a rating of "proficient" in

1. Writing in the Target Language (TL) – WRITING PROFICIENCY
2. TL-text comprehension - READING PROFICIENCY
3. Oral communication in a variety of settings in the TL – ORAL COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY
4. The understanding of the culture of the TL and in the ability to function appropriately in the TL culture - CULTURE PROFICIENCY
Methods

FL&L has instituted an Assessment Committee which is responsible for directing, implementing, and changing the departmental assessment policies. Program assessment methods in the department include four major components:

(A) Portfolio
(A1) FLAL 400 Design and Creation of Electronic Portfolios for Foreign Language Majors
(B) Northern Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (NOPI)
(C) Exit Questionnaire (Appendix 2)
(D) Alumni Survey

Outcomes by Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
<th>NOPI</th>
<th>Exit Questionnaire</th>
<th>Alumni Survey</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission-specific proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Communication proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multilingual communities proficiency</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of Methods – Summary - Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible</th>
<th>Objective(s) addressed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Portfolio</td>
<td>students turn in their representative works at the end of each semester</td>
<td>Departmental Assessment Coordinator, Assistant Chair</td>
<td>all</td>
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<tr>
<td>All students declaring majors in French, German, or Spanish are required to create an electronic portfolio (see App. 3). The objective of this portfolio is twofold: (i) it will help the Foreign Language Department to assess the student's progress over the time the student is at NIU, and thereby assess itself (ii) it will provide the student with a valuable portfolio he/she could use to demonstrate progress and current level of proficiency in a foreign language, for example, for employment or graduate school. Students should include in their portfolios digitized audiotapes, videotapes, papers, journals, pictures, essays, compositions, translations, or other creative works that provide evidence of their proficiency in their major language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(A1) FLAL 400 Design and Creation of Electronic Portfolios for Foreign Language Majors [1 credit, S/U]. In order to prepare their electronic portfolio, students take this required course after having completed at least 75 credit hours. The course covers the uses of a variety of multimedia technologies to maintain authentic samples of a student's work in a format best suited to represent the assessment criteria outlined by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Students must pass the class in order to graduate.</td>
<td>offered every semester</td>
<td>Instructor of the course, the FL Multimedia Instructional consultant</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(B) Northern Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (NOPI)
The NOPI, a performance-based speaking test, is given to assess students' oral proficiency, i.e., their ability to interact orally in their chosen language. The NOPI consists of a master test tape, which contains all test instructions and test items, and an examinee response tape, which is used to record the student's responses. Tapes are accompanied by a test booklet, which contains the test instructions and test tasks. Directions to all tasks are presented in both the test booklet and on the test tape in English. These directions contain a description of the context of the speaking task, including whom the examinee is addressing, what the situation is, why the speaking task needs to be performed, and any other relevant information to make the task as authentic as possible. After reading and hearing these directions, examinees are given a brief pause to organize their thoughts. Next, a native speaker of the target language makes a statement or asks a question appropriate to the situation described in the English directions. The examinee attempts to perform the indicated task by responding to the native speaker in a rejoinder appropriate to the situation. The prototypical NOPI may end with a wind-down consisting of easy questions in the target language that aim to put the examinee at ease.

(C) Exit Questionnaire
In the exit questionnaire (see App. 4) the students assess their own education in FL&L.

(D) Alumni Survey
Graduates of the FLAL program are invited to share their ideas one year and five years after graduation. Students’ are asked about their experiences at NIU and their perception of how well the program prepared them for their careers (App. 5).