

## **German MA Program Assessment**

**AY 2024-2025**

**1. Contact:** Jennifer Hoyer, Director of Graduate Studies, MLANMA-German

### **2. WLLC Department Mission**

The Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures believes itself central to the fulfillment of the mission of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, adopted from Senator Fulbright's writings, as follows: "... the highest function of higher education is the teaching of things in perspective, toward the purposes of enriching the life of the individual, cultivating the free and inquiring mind, and advancing the effort to bring reason, justice, and humanity..."

Our departmental mission, more specifically, is to serve our students, our state, our nation, and the world, by embodying and demonstrating the values to be derived from knowing ancient and modern languages and cultures. We do this by nurturing and supporting the teaching, research, and service missions of a top-quality faculty; by offering and maintaining a comprehensive range of challenging language and professional development programs; by attracting and retaining a diverse student body; and by promoting innovative research among faculty and students.

### **3. MLANMA-Germ Program Goals**

1. Students completing an MA in the Department of World Languages should possess a broad knowledge and advanced critical understanding of the culture, history, and literature corresponding to their major language,
2. As befits a liberal arts program, students completing a major should develop effective written and oral communications skills, as well as the ability to apply the skills of critical thinking to problem solving. They will also acquire valuable pedagogical skills.
3. Students completing an MA in World Languages should have developed an advanced proficiency in their language, including practical abilities in reading and writing, and in listening comprehension and speaking, as well as a solid grasp of the structure and grammar of the language.

**4. Student Learning Outcome 1.** Students should gain in-depth knowledge of key works of German literature from the Middle Ages through the present day.

#### **A. Assessment Measure 1. Coursework in Graduate-level GERM Offerings**

- The German MA program addresses the traditional German-language literary canon while working to broaden its scope to include historically marginalized authors, perspectives, and genres. It provides an excellent foundation both for those of our graduates going on for study in a Ph.D. program and for those who will be teaching upon completion of the program. The MLANMA-German program has historically offered three basic types of courses: Genre courses, which provide a historical overview of the development of three key literary genres Drama, Novella, and Lyric Poetry; epoch courses, which explore works across genres during the periods of the Middle Ages/Baroque, Enlightenment, Modernism, and Post-1945; and special topics courses derived from faculty research specialties, including Cinema, Comics, Migrant Narratives, and Germany and the Holocaust. While each course functions differently, all ask students to engage with multiple works of literature or other media and discuss them in German in a seminar format. Assessments range from reading comprehension quizzes to 15-20 page research papers and creative or applied final projects. Over four semesters, MA candidates are exposed to and work analytically with a broad spectrum of texts and media while discussing theory, history, and culture. In addition to GERM courses, students take two WLLC courses focused on either pedagogy or Digital Humanities.
- Indirect and direct assessments depending on individual courses.
- In Fall 2024, two graduate courses were offered: GERM 52203 (Medieval to Early Modern German Lit) and GERM 57003 (Independent Study on Deutsch als Fremdsprache/teaching German). In Spring 2025, three graduate courses were offered: GERM 57003 (Berlin), GERM 57003 (Foodways), and GERM 57003 (Independent Study research project).

##### **i. Key Personnel.**

- Dr Kathleen Condray (GERM 57003 [Foodways])
- Dr Alexandra Hagen (GERM 57003 [Independent Study DaF; Berlin])
- Dr Jennifer Hoyer (GERM 52203; GERM 57003 [Independent Study research project])

##### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- In AY 2024-25, our two MLANMA-German students performed well in their coursework and made substantial progress toward the degree.
- Offering only two graduate seminars each semester proved problematic; enrollment issues, however, make it impossible to offer any strictly 5000-level courses, aside from independent studies, which are not taught on load.

### **iii. Recommendations.**

- Owing to enrollment, most upper-division GERM courses now need to have an undergraduate and a graduate section.
- Most semesters, MLANMA-GERM candidates will need to take an independent study (pedagogy or research project), a WLLC courses (Digital Humanities, Linguistics, or Pedagogy), and/or a course outside of GERM/WLLC in a supporting program area, such as SEVI, ENGL, GNST or WLIT.

## **B. Assessment Measure 2. Comprehensive Examination**

- In their last semester of study, MLANMA-German candidates have historically sat for six hours of written exams. One hour was composed of the brief identification of important terms, time periods, and authors. The remaining exams consisted of five essays (one hour allotted for each), in which students discuss both literary periods and the works of specific authors. Students were also required to take part in a one-hour oral exam after the examining committee had the opportunity to read over the written portion of the exam in order to further discuss and elucidate their answers. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, however, the faculty have chosen to administer comprehensive exams in a one- to one-and-a-half-hour question and answer format. Students are asked to respond to questions about material they have covered in coursework in order to demonstrate that they can make connections across works and time periods to identify major themes, developments, and concepts in German-language literary history. The faculty judge the student's responses according to accuracy, coherence, and intellectual depth.
- Direct assessment

### **i. Acceptable and Ideal Targets**

- 100% of graduating MA candidates should pass the comprehensive examination, which is required to receive the degree. In the event that students do not pass the examination, they will be given the opportunity to retry the examination. During the last ten years, no candidate has failed to pass the comprehensive examination.

### **ii. Key Personnel**

- Dr Kathleen Condray
- Dr Alexandra Hagen
- Dr Jennifer Hoyer
- Dr Brett Sterling

### **iii. Summary of Findings.**

- In Spring 2025, one student, Owen Durham, took and passed the comprehensive examination.

### **iv. Recommendations.**

- Since shifting to an oral exam format in Spring 2020 out of necessity, the faculty has questioned the efficacy of the previous essay-based assessment method. While students routinely passed the exam in that format, the responses that were generated tended toward the reproduction of material that had been memorized by rote. While this did indicate that they had learned much throughout the program, it did not immediately demonstrate their ability to look at the program holistically and synthesize the information they had acquired. The oral format provides students an opportunity to show how they work with the material they have read and better display their skills in analysis and synthesis.
- We plan to refine the oral exam format from what was a choice made out of necessity to one that arises organically from assessments in the program's courses. As courses are reshaped and redesigned, we will deliberately align the comprehensive exam with those courses.
- For spring 2024, Dr Alexandra Hagen introduced discussion of pedagogical training into the exam. We plan to retain going forward.

**5. Student Learning Outcome 2.** Students will develop effective written and oral communications skills, as well as the ability to apply the skills of critical thinking to problem solving.

### **A. Assessment Measure 1.** Coursework in Graduate-level GERM Offerings

- All courses in the MLANMA-German program require students to analyze works of literature and other media critically. In GERM 53403, for example, Dr. Hoyer introduced students to key theoretical works, for example Jeffrey Cohen's "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" and Donna J. Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto," and asked students to view works of Modernist literature through the lens of these theoretical approaches. Various courses also require students to write in-depth 15–20-page research papers on topics of their own design, in German or in English depending on the course and instructor. This means that students are not only responsible for analyzing works from the course, but also for devising their own research topic and executing it. Since coursework in the MLANMA-German is based on a seminar model, students are required to engage with

one another in discussion on course topics and texts in spoken German, which entails summarizing and synthesizing information, as well as arguing a position.

- Indirect and direct assessments depending on course.

#### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr Kathleen Condray (GERM 57003 [Foodways])
- Dr Alexandra Hagen (GERM 57003 [Berlin])
- Dr Jennifer Hoyer (GERM 52203, GERM 57003 [independent study research project])

#### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- In AY 2024-25, students performed well in their coursework and displayed improvement in written and oral communication. Students in GERM 57003 (pedagogy; Berlin; Foodways) were required to create and present multimodal critical reflections as well as lesson plans; in GERM 57003 (independent study research project), Owen Durham completed a 17-page paper synthesizing philosophical and etymological changes across texts in the late Medieval to early Modern epochs.

#### **iii. Recommendations.**

- All four faculty in the program continue to experiment with methods of inquiry and assessment in graduate seminars in order to foster development and encourage the unique strengths and goals of our MA candidates.
- Explicit focus on advanced and superior language structures and use of theory texts have improved students' abilities and confidence in engaging in seminar discussion. Both have also elevated the level of contributions.

### **6. Student Learning Outcome 3. Students will acquire pedagogical skills.**

#### **A. Assessment Measure 1. Teaching GERM 10103-20203**

- In most cases, students in the MLANMA-German program are provided a teaching assistantship when joining the program; on some occasions, a student is offered instead a Graduate Assistantship in the WLLC DH Studio, part of which also includes supporting curricular design in the GERM section. As a TA, during the four semesters of their MA studies, students teach two sections per semester of beginning (GERM 10103 and 10203) or intermediate (GERM 20103 and 20203) German language; if a GA, there will

be a mix of direct teaching and curriculum support through the Studio. While students meet weekly with Dr Alexandra Hagen, our TA coordinator, as Teaching Assistants they are the instructors of record responsible for teaching every session on their own and grading student work in their classes without faculty assistance. For AY 2023-2024, Dr Hagen began to introduce a new curriculum, starting in the first-year sequence with the innovative textbook *Impuls Deutsch*, and assessing needs in the second-year sequence in order to determine which, if any, textbook should be introduced. Teaching and Graduate Assistants have been instrumental in helping Dr Hagen implement and assess the efficacy of these changes. Moreover, Dr Hagen observes TAs once a semester and provides feedback on their performance. Pedagogical skills are evaluated primarily by Dr Hagen with support and input from Dr Hoyer, the current Director of Graduate Studies in German.

- Direct assessment

## **B. Assessment Measure 2. Deutsch als Fremdsprache (teaching German) course**

- In Fall 2024, Dr. Hagen offered as an independent study a seminar on pedagogy for teaching German. This will be offered as staffing is available and enrollment is viable.

### **i. Acceptable and Ideal Targets**

- Ideally, all MLANMA-German candidates should demonstrate effective teaching skills, in particular current methodologies in addition to a firm grasp of modalities and skills appropriate to different levels, prior to graduation from the program.

### **ii. Key Personnel**

- Dr Alexandra Hagen (Elementary and Intermediate Language Sequence, TA coordinator)
- Dr Jennifer Hoyer (Director of Graduate Studies in German)

### **iii. Summary of Findings.**

- In AY 2024-25, students in the MLANMA-German program demonstrated improvement in their pedagogical skills, as observed by Dr Hagen during both semesters.

### **iv. Recommendations.**

- In Fall 2024, Dr Hagen offered a graduate seminar focusing entirely on Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF—teaching of German language), complementing TA experience

with sustained academic training in pedagogy for teaching German. This is the first such course ever taught at the U of A.

**7. Student Learning Outcome 4.** Students will develop advanced proficiency in German.

**A. Assessment Measure 1.** Coursework in Graduate-level GERM Offerings

- All coursework in the MLANMA-German program is taught entirely in German. Students are thus immersed in the language from weekly readings of literature in German to in-class oral discussions and written coursework. Students are evaluated on their language proficiency throughout the program, with written work being assessed and corrected not only according to stylistic and academic quality, but also linguistic accuracy. Dr Condray, Dr Hagen, and Dr Hoyer also embed advanced language practice in courses such as GERM 52203, 53403, 52703, and 57003 (Activism, Foodways, Berlin), asking students to identify and work with high-level constructions such as passive voice and subjunctive mood to analyze course texts. Paired with the intense engagement with the language that students experience as teachers (see 6.A above), students develop advanced proficiency throughout the entirety of the MLANMA-German program.
- Indirect assessment

**i. Key Personnel**

- Dr Kathleen Condray
- Dr Alexandra Hagen
- Dr Jennifer Hoyer
- Dr Brett Sterling

**ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Students have responded well to explicit linguistic practice in graduate-level courses, and have subsequently demonstrated improvement, especially with high-level concepts. This was true with students during AY 2024-25.

**iii. Recommendations.**

- Given the success of explicit linguistic practice in select courses within the program, it may be advantageous to embed this practice throughout all coursework. Over the next two years, as courses come around in the program cycle, each faculty member will make an effort to include this kind of work into their individual courses.

## **8. Overall Recommendations**

- The MLANMA-German program must be redesigned, both in light of changes in the discipline and in light of changing enrollment.

## **9. Action Plan**

- Each candidate's course plan will be tailored to thematic cross-level seminars and to individual areas of interest.
- In spring 2024, we submitted a proposal to create an MLANMA-German track that combines German Studies with SEVI (entrepreneurship). We hope this forward-thinking track will be of interest to 21<sup>st</sup>-century German students, in particular our large volume of ENGR undergraduate majors. This track began fall of 2025 and currently has 2 students enrolled for AY 2025-2026.
- The GERM graduate advisor is working in consultation with graduate advisors in SPAN, FREN and WLIT to explore the potential of creating other team-taught or cross-language WLLC courses that can support the instruction and practice of generalizable and collaborative WLLC graduate student skills, for example in research practices, professional development, and critical theory.