

**Student Learning Outcomes Report
Spanish MA**

Department of World Languages

University of Arkansas

AY 2024-2025 (Prepared on May 2025)

1. Contact Names: Violeta Lorenzo Feliciano (section head); Rachel ten Haaf (graduate coordinator)

2. 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. 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.

Section mission: The Spanish Program at the University of Arkansas offers a balanced course of study leading to a Master of Arts degree. Graduate students take courses primarily in Iberian and Latin American literature and culture. The program also offers courses in second-language teaching methodology and linguistics as well as in technology-enhanced pedagogy (e.g., WLLC 50203, WLLC 50303). Our M.A. provides solid preparation for students who intend to pursue a Ph.D. or wish to teach at the college or K-12 levels. Its comprehensive curriculum also provides a sound base for a career in education, government, or social services.

<https://fulbright.uark.edu/departments/world-languages/graduate/spanish-ma-program.php>

3. Program Goals

Spanish MA

1. Students completing an MA in the Department of World Languages should possess a broad knowledge and advanced critical understanding of the culture, civilization, and literature corresponding to their major language.

2. As befits a liberal arts program, students completing a masters 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 when appropriate, as well as a solid grasp of the structure and grammar of the language.

4. Student Learning Outcome 1.

Achieve Advanced Spanish skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

A. Assessment Measure 1.

- Description: Oral presentations or podcasts to demonstrate competence in selected topics related to the program, public speaking skills, Spanish oral proficiency, and effectiveness of communication. Required research papers demonstrating advanced Spanish writing skills. Required exams testing ability to read and analyze novels, poems, plays and other works in Spanish.
- Assessment: Even though some faculty members use rubrics to evaluate assignments, for the most part our assessment is indirect since it is based on assignment/course grades.
- Information for reviewers: The program offers a variety of graduate courses in which students can develop their Spanish reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

C. Key Personnel

Faculty members that taught graduate courses during the AY 2024-2025 are responsible for assessing this learning outcome in their classes. As explained above, this assessment is indirect.

- Almenara (Associate Professor) for special investigations course SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon during Fall 2024.
- Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor) for SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures during Fall 2024
- Offerman (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics during Fall 2024 and SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics during Spring 2025.
- ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries during Spring 2025.

D. Summary of Findings.

- Based on the overall academic performance of our current students: all seem to have Spanish skills at the advanced-low level or above.
- 7 students took the comprehensive exam during Spring 2025 and passed (two had to do an additional short assignment which they passed).

E. Recommendations

- N/A since our assessment, at this time, is mostly indirect.

5. Additional Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome 2.

Gain expertise in the literatures and the cultural history of Spain, Latin America, and Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S.

A. Assessment Measure 2.

- Description: Students in the MA program take a variety of courses on the literary and cultural history of the Hispanic world. In these courses there are required exams that test the ability to read novels, poems, plays and other works in Spanish and/or required research papers to show the ability to conduct research, critical writing skills, advanced Spanish writing skills, and critical concepts in literary and cultural theories. Sometimes there are oral presentations so that students may demonstrate competence in selected topics related to the program. In addition, in the comprehensive exam that all SPANMA students take they must demonstrate familiarity with the literature and culture of the Hispanic world in five of the following eight areas: Middle Ages, Early Modern Spain, 18th-19th Century Spain, 20th-21st Century Spain, Colonial period (Spanish-America), 19th Century Spanish-America, 20th-21st Century Spanish-America, U.S. Latino/a. Students focusing on language pedagogy must demonstrate familiarity with second language acquisition teaching methods/linguistics and with the literature and culture in four of the eight areas listed above.
- Assessment: Indirect since most of the assessments are based on assignment/course grades and comprehension exam grades (no rubrics are used).
- Information for reviewers: The comprehensive exam consists of a written part and an oral defense. All parts of the exam are conducted in Spanish. The written exam consists of two parts: The first part includes essay questions on historical periods, literary genres, and cultural movements. Students must answer three essay questions out of five, including at least one from Latin America and one from Spain. Students have three hours to complete this part. The second part of the written exam includes twenty-five (25) identification words or phrases related to the works, authors, and cultural movements from Latin America and Spain as well as key literary terms and pedagogy concepts. Students also have three hours to complete this part. The students who successfully pass the written exam will have an oral exam with at least three faculty members. In the oral exam students may be asked to clarify or expand their essay questions or identifications. The students may also be asked about the essay questions not selected in the written part. The exam is evaluated as follows: High Pass/Pass/Fail. In case of failure, the comprehensive exam can only be repeated once. The exam will be evaluated by a committee of at least three faculty members selected by the graduate advisor. The answers of both the written and oral components of the comprehensive exam should reflect a successful completion of coursework and thorough familiarity with the works, authors, and periods of the MA reading list and a general understanding of the cultural history of the Hispanic world. If applicable, the answers of both the written and oral components of the comprehensive exam should reflect a successful completion of coursework and thorough familiarity in the field of pedagogy/second-language teaching and/or linguistics. In the exam, the students must demonstrate advanced Spanish oral and writing skills. The essays should be well-organized, coherent, and clearly-written. Essay questions should offer concrete examples and references from the works in the list and the texts covered in the courses taken. In the identification part, the student should provide key information on the word or phrase, demonstrating familiarity with the

respective literary/linguistics work, author, or period in question. In one or two paragraphs the students should provide information on the corresponding country, period, author, movement. The identification answers should also provide key details on the content of the literary/linguistics works in question. Common identifications are main characters, titles, authors, movements, and literary/linguistics/pedagogy concepts. In the oral exam the student should be able to produce knowledgeable and articulate responses on topics and works related to his or her selected periods.

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

C. Key Personnel (who is responsible for the assessment of this measure).

Faculty members that taught graduate literature/culture courses during the AY 2024-2025 are responsible for assessing this learning outcome in their classes. As explained above, this assessment is indirect.

- Almenara (Associate Professor) for special investigations course SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon during Fall 2024.
- Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor) for SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures during Fall 2024
- Offerman (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics during Fall 2024 and SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics during Spring 2025.
- ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries during Spring 2025.

Comprehensive exams committee members for Spring 2025:

Almenara (Associate Professor), Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor), Offerman (Assistant Professor), Restrepo (University Professor), ten Haaf (Assistant Professor and MA coordinator)

D. Summary of Findings.

- In late Spring 2025, 7 students took the comprehensive exam during Spring 2025 and passed (two had to do an additional short assignment which they passed).

E. Recommendations

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

Student Learning Outcome 3.

Attain general knowledge of main authors, movements and periods, and representative texts.

A. Assessment Measure 3.

- **Description:** Students in the MA program take a variety of courses on the literary and cultural history of the Hispanic world. In these courses there are required exams that test the ability to read novels, poems, plays and other works in Spanish and/or required research papers to show the ability to conduct research, critical writing skills, advanced Spanish writing skills, and critical concepts in literary and cultural theories. Sometimes there are oral presentations so that students may demonstrate competence in selected topics related to the program. In addition, in the comprehensive exam that all SPANMA students take they must demonstrate familiarity with the literature and culture of the Hispanic world in five of the following eight areas: Middle Ages, Early Modern Spain, 18th-19th Century Spain, 20th-21st Century Spain, Colonial period (Spanish-America), 19th Century Spanish-America, 20th-21st Century Spanish-America, U.S. Latino/a. Students focusing on language pedagogy must demonstrate familiarity with second language acquisition teaching methods/linguistics and with the literature and culture in four of the eight areas listed above.
- **Assessment:** Indirect since most of the assessments are based on assignment/course grades and comprehension exam grades (no rubrics are used).
- **Information for reviewers:** see information for learning outcome 2 for details about the comprehensive exam

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

C. Key Personnel (who is responsible for the assessment of this measure).

Faculty members that taught graduate literature/culture courses during the AY 2024-2025 are responsible for assessing this learning outcome in their classes. As explained above, this assessment is indirect.

- Almenara (Associate Professor) for special investigations course SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon during Fall 2024.
- Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor) for SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures during Fall 2024
- Offerman (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics during Fall 2024 and SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics during Spring 2025.
- ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries during Spring 2025.

Comprehensive exams committee members for Spring 2025:

Almenara (Associate Professor), Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor), Offerman (Assistant Professor), Restrepo (University Professor), ten Haaf (Assistant Professor and MA coordinator)

D. Summary of Findings.

- In late Spring 2025, 7 students took the comprehensive exam during Spring 2025 and passed (two had to do an additional short assignment which they passed).

E. Recommendations

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

Student Learning Outcome 4.

Develop advanced competence in literary and cultural analysis and research.

A. Assessment Measure 4.

- Description: Students in the MA program take a variety of courses on the literary and cultural history of the Hispanic world. In these courses there are required exams that test the ability to read novels, poems, plays and other works in Spanish and/or required research papers to show the ability to conduct research, critical writing skills, advanced Spanish writing skills, and critical concepts in literary and cultural theories. Sometimes there are oral presentations so that students may demonstrate competence in selected topics related to the program. In addition, in the comprehensive exam that all SPANMA students take they must demonstrate familiarity with the literature and culture of the Hispanic world in five of the following eight areas: Middle Ages, Early Modern Spain, 18th-19th Century Spain, 20th-21st Century Spain, Colonial period (Spanish-America), 19th Century Spanish-America, 20th-21st Century Spanish-America, U.S. Latino/a. Students focusing on language pedagogy must demonstrate familiarity with second language acquisition teaching methods/linguistics and with the literature and culture in four of the eight areas listed above.
- Assessment: Indirect since most of the assessments are based on assignment/course grades and comprehension exam grades (no rubrics are used).
- Information for reviewers: see learning outcome 2 for details about the comprehensive exam

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

C. Key Personnel (who is responsible for the assessment of this measure).

Faculty members that taught graduate courses during the AY 2024-2025 are responsible for assessing this learning outcome in their classes. As explained above, this assessment is indirect.

- Almenara (Associate Professor) for special investigations course SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon during Fall 2024.
- Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor) for SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures during Fall 2024
- Offerman (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics during Fall 2024 and SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics during Spring 2025.

- ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries during Spring 2025.

Comprehensive exams committee members for Spring 2025:

Almenara (Associate Professor), Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor), Offerman (Assistant Professor), Restrepo (University Professor), ten Haaf (Assistant Professor and MA coordinator)

D. Summary of Findings.

See summary findings for learning outcomes 2 & 3.

E. Recommendations (not required for indirect measures)

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

Student Learning Outcome 5.

Develop advanced expository and critical writing skills.

A. Assessment Measure 5.

- Description: Students in the MA program take a variety of courses on the literary and cultural history of the Hispanic world as well as courses on language learning pedagogies/linguistics. In most of these courses there are required research papers to show the ability to conduct research, critical writing skills, advanced Spanish writing skills, and critical concepts in literary, linguistics, and/or cultural theories.
- Assessment: Indirect since most of the assessment is based on assignment/course grades
- Information for reviewers: see learning outcome 1 for additional details

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets (not required for indirect measures).

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

C. Key Personnel (who is responsible for the assessment of this measure).

Faculty members that taught graduate courses during AY 2024-2025 are responsible for assessing this learning outcome in their classes. As explained above, this assessment is indirect.

- Almenara (Associate Professor) for special investigations course SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon during Fall 2024.
- Lorenzo Feliciano (Associate Professor) for SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures during Fall 2024
- Offerman (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics during Fall 2024 and SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics during Spring 2025.
- ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) for SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries during Spring 2025.

D. Summary of Findings.

All SPANMA students in these courses passed them with grades of A or B.

E. Recommendations (not required for indirect measures)

- N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

Student Learning Outcome 6.

Develop pedagogical skills for teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language.

A. Assessment Measure 6.

- Description: Students in the MA program take at least one course on language learning pedagogies and, if applicable, are tested on pedagogy in the comprehensive exam.
- Assessment: Indirect since most of the assessments are based on assignment/course grades and comprehension exam grades (no rubrics are used).
 - Information for reviewers: All students that are TAs must take the WLLC 50603 Teaching Foreign Languages on the College Level. Those that are in the pedagogy track of our MA take more than one course on language learning pedagogies. Moreover, students focusing on language pedagogy are tested in this field in their comprehensive exam and must demonstrate familiarity with second language acquisition teaching methods.

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets (not required for indirect measures).

- N/A since, currently, assessment is indirect

C. Key Personnel

- Heather Offerman (Assistant Professor) for WLLC 50603 in Fall 2023, SPAN 50703 in Fall 2024, and SPAN 57003 in Spring 2025
- It is worth mentioning that TAs are supervised by Brenda Magnetti (Teaching Assistant Professor of Spanish)
- It is also worth mentioning that Rachel ten Haaf (Assistant Professor) included a teaching literature portfolio assignment in her SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries course. This assignment comprised, among other tasks, a 10-page explanation of the course level, methodology, learning outcomes, and assessment, as well as a reflection. The rationale behind this is that several SPANMA students in this cohort will go on to teach at the high school and college levels, where they will eventually be required to teach literature.

D. Summary of Findings.

SPANMA students during AY 2024-2025 took WLLC 50603 during Fall 2023 when they started the Spanish MA program. They all passed the course with grades of A or B.

All students that took the comprehensive exams during AY 2024-2025 were in the pedagogy track. See details about comprehensive exam results in the summary findings for learning outcomes 2 & 3.

E. Recommendations (not required for indirect measures)

N/A, since assessment is currently indirect.

6. Overall Recommendations

It is evident that all our assessments are currently indirect, and steps must be taken to ensure that each learning outcome has at least one form of direct assessment. Perhaps the first step is identifying cases where this can be addressed by creating a rubric. We should also engage in conversations with programs similar to ours to share ideas on evaluating papers in various graduate courses.

The section has been discussing revamping the MA program and has considered the possibility of “capstone experiences,” such as internships, as well as implementing portfolios of student work. If these options are implemented with appropriate rubrics and guidelines, they would move us toward direct assessment. However, we have also observed that some students participate in numerous extracurricular activities that may limit the time they dedicate to their studies. Therefore, we must be cautious about the time commitments that “capstone experiences” would require.

There have also been discussions about implementing the course “Introduction to Graduate Studies” to support students who enter our program without a solid background in academic writing and literary analysis. A pilot was attempted during the August intersession of 2021, but unfortunately, no students enrolled. While workshops during orientation and throughout the semester have been offered in the past, some faculty members feel these workshops do little to address the academic challenges students face.

The section has also discussed whether the comprehensive exam format has become outdated as a mode of assessment. Further discussion on this topic is needed.

In light of the growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workforce, the section should consider incorporating assignments that explore ethical uses of AI platforms, along with corresponding assessment tools. Furthermore, given the increasing number of faculty assigning projects related to digital humanities, the section should evaluate whether digital humanities (DH) projects and/or the ethical use of AI should be integrated into the program’s formal learning outcomes.

Lastly, all TAs are observed at least once per semester. The section should consider incorporating these observations as part of the assessment for Learning Outcome 6.

7. Action Plan

The section has been planning to revamp the MA program. This process will take time; as a section, we had initially decided to begin the revamp during AY 2024-2025. However, due to changes in personnel duties and staffing, we had to postpone this until at least AY 2025-2026. There are many issues that need to be addressed, which makes it difficult to develop a concrete action plan without prior discussion involving the entire section.

That being said, Student Learning Outcome #4 (Develop advanced competence in literary and cultural analysis and research) is an area we can start working on. This is based on the program requirement stating: *“Students will take SPAN 57003 Special Topics or an equivalent research seminar, as approved by the graduate advisor. In this course, students will be required to present a research paper that meets professional research methods and standards.”* While most students write a research paper in their SPAN 57003 classes, we can begin by tracking how this is being done and initiating a discussion on how to assess these papers.

Timeline:

- Discussion during AY 2025-2026
- Rubric creation: TBD
- Use rubric: TBD

Persons involved: All faculty members who frequently teach graduate courses

8. Supporting Attachments

• Although considered a form of indirect assessment, the Spanish section developed exit surveys for MA students to better evaluate program strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. Results from students who graduated during AY 2022-2023 are included as supporting attachments in this report. It is worth noting that, although the survey indicates 7 responses, it appears that only 2 or 3 individuals answered the questions, and they may have been disgruntled.

Please note that there was no exit survey for AY 2023-2024, as only one MA student graduated and we could not ensure the anonymity of their responses. Responses from students graduating during AY 2024-2025 will be collected this summer.

NOTES:

Here is some additional information on the type of assignments in the graduate courses taught during AY 2024-2025:

1-SPAN 5750V on indigenous literatures from Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon (Almenara, Fall 2024)

- One 15-minute oral presentation
- Two papers (12 pages each)

2- SPAN 52703 Survey of Spanish Culture from the 18th to 19th Centuries (ten Haaf, Spring 2025)

- Twelve short papers (2 pages each)
- One oral presentation
- One mini-portfolio on teaching literature (included, among other tasks, a 10-paged explanation of course level, methodology, learning outcomes, and assessment as well as reflection)

3- SPAN 59403 U.S. Latino/a Literatures and Cultures (Lorenzo Feliciano, Fall 2024)

- Two short papers (3 pages each)
- Three written assignments (at least 2 pages each)

- One final paper (minimum: 12 pages)

4- SPAN 50703 Intro to Hispanic Linguistics (Offerman, Fall 2024)

- Five short papers (5 pages each)
- Three presentations
- Final paper (at least 12 pages)

5-SPAN 57003 Special Topics on phonetics and acoustics (Offerman, Spring 2025)

- One paper (4-6 pages)
- Two presentations
- Phonetics project