AN EVALUATION OF AN ONLINE MASTERS DEGREE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

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The purpose of this evaluation was to determine to what extent an M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching program at a large Midwest university is aligned with online learning standards of quality and to measure the degree of satisfaction of current and past students with their experience in the program. The evaluation followed a program-oriented evaluation approach with participatory components. Steps in which stakeholder participation was most helpful for this project were in the setting of evaluative questions and the design of data collection procedures and instruments.

Data collection and analysis followed a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data was collected via student and alumni surveys, while qualitative data was collected through student, alumni, and faculty interviews and focus groups. Existing course content and design also constituted a form of data which was analyzed using the Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR). Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive techniques to search for trends in the data as well as to identify those elements of the program are performing well and those who are not. Qualitative data was analyzed utilizing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Overall, the outcomes of this evaluation are strongly and consistently positive in a large majority of the areas investigated. Specifically, the following are areas of strength for the program: its faculty team, the quality of instruction, and the impact on students' professional career. Alongside these strengths, this program evaluation also identified a few areas where

significant or pervasive issues are present: advising and onboarding, peer relationships, timeliness of feedback, accessibility, and faculty support.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following recommendations are presented to the program's stakeholders: revise onboarding procedures; further integrate group projects into the existing curriculum; implement a feedback commitment; conduct an accessibility review; and investigate avenues for ID support at the institution. Even though the program is already performing at an exemplary level, implementing these recommendations will address the gaps identified by this evaluation and strengthen the program's position in the foreign language teaching field.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Online education is increasingly becoming an integral part of the mission of post-secondary institutions in the United States. A survey conducted in 2019 revealed that nearly two-thirds of college administrators considered distance learning a crucial component of their institution's strategic plan (Xu & Xu, 2019). Another report from 2018 showed that approximately one-third of post-secondary students were enrolled in at least one online course every semester (Seaman et al., 2018).

It is noteworthy that almost all public institutions and a significant majority of private institutions offer at least one online course. By 2016, a substantial 72% of public institutions and 50% of private institutions in the United States were going a step further by offering at least one fully online degree program (Xu & Xu, 2019). This indicates a growing commitment to online education, as offering distance degrees requires the implementation of additional components such as advising, electives, and gen-ed courses. The increasing popularity of online courses and programs can be attributed to their enhanced flexibility, affordability, and accessibility. These factors make online education more appealing to students whose circumstances may prevent them from enrolling in traditional on-campus programs (Li & Irby, 2008; Xu & Xu, 2019).

Online graduate and professional programs have also experienced a significant growth in the past decade. In fall of 2021, 40% of all graduate students in the US were enrolled exclusively in distance education courses, up from 33% in 2019 (NCES, 2023), a trend accelerated by the reliance of technology-supported instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mishra et al., 2020). Of these students, about 47% were enrolled at institutions located in the same state in which they resided.

Graduate and professional degrees are much more focused on helping students reach career goals than undergraduate degrees (Gardner and Barker, 2020), and distance graduate offerings provide students with the flexibility to obtain an advanced degree without having to leave their current job or move to a different state. Students returning to graduate schools have a much wider age range than undergraduate students (Gardner and Barker, 2020) and usually return for one of three reasons: to transition into an academic career path, to change their focus of their career to a new specialty area, or to advance their current career path (Peters & Daly, 2012). In the last two decades, universities increasingly tapped into the market of professionals who wanted to upskill or change career by offering practice-oriented online graduate degrees. The graduate program presently under evaluation is one of those programs. In 2010, The then-directors of the language center at a large Midwest university realized there was a dearth of graduate opportunities for K-12 language educators in the US, especially in the online space. The leadership saw this as an opportunity and, as part of their center's strategy, decided to develop and launch a fully online Masters degree for language educators. The resulting degree program was launched in 2012.

Problem Statement

The program under evaluation is an M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching program at a large Midwest university. The program is housed in the liberal arts college at the institution and it is a fully online program designed to serve primary and secondary language educators throughout the United States.

The evaluation of the program was commissioned by the program director. The director felt the program was both undervalued and underfunded at the college, perhaps as a result of it being the first fully online degree in the college's history. This perceived lack of value is at odds with the realities of the program: it is by far the largest graduate degree in the college, bringing the institution not only prestige but also a significant amount of tuition dollars. What is the reason for this disconnect? The stigma against online education, especially within academic circles, is well documented in the research literature (Adams & DeFleur, 2005; DePriest & Absher, 2013; Karl & Peluchette 2013; Slagle et al., 2022) where, for example, findings show that university administrators consistently prefer to hire candidates with traditional degrees over candidates with distance education degrees. This systematic devaluing of online programs can extend to programs within the same institution, and can create a perceived internal ranking among programs. As the faculty work to establish the program's reputation within the college and institution, evaluation results may help them make their case with more precision and confidence.

Another issue the program is currently trying to navigate is difficulty recruiting new students. Even though the faculty team is very active in their recruiting efforts by attending language educator conferences, publishing scholarship to support and empower their target audience, and placing ads both in print and online, the number of incoming students has diminished considerably in the last few years, with only a handful of students admitted in Fall 2023. To what causes should this dynamic be attributed? A study of external dynamics is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but assessing the program's impact on students can ensure the program stays relevant, competitive, and meets the evolving needs of students and the language teaching field.

Finally, as the program looked forward to undergoing a strategic planning endeavor in the following year, understanding how the program was performing at the time would allow stakeholders to cast a vision for the next decade in a more informed manner. Having never been evaluated formally, the program lacked empirical data on its performance in relation to its stated goals. The program's faculty, being very involved in the day-to-day academic and administrative affairs, have a good sense of what may be the strengths and weaknesses of the program, but that perspective is only informed by their individual experiences. In light of increased competition in the online language education MA space (with some competitors charging significantly lower tuition rates), a better understanding of the program's performance can help the leadership both in making the program a more competitive product as well as communicating the strengths of the program to prospective students.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders for this evaluation program are individuals that will be impacted by the outcome of the evaluation. These stakeholders are committed to the program because they are either directly involved in determining the program of study, implementing the courses that comprise the program of study, or are students working towards continuing their education through either obtaining their Master's degree or certification in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). These stakeholders would like to see the continued success of the program at Michigan State, as such a success would validate their work, strengthen their standing within the institution, and improve their experience within the program in the future.

The primary stakeholder for this evaluation is the Program Director. Her interest in the findings of the evaluation are evident at multiple levels. First, the recommendations provided upon completion of the evaluation program can be used by the director to continue to improve the program, advocate for it, recruit new students, and discuss the sustainability and success of the program. She is the one with the most power to make changes within the program, and therefore she is the one that is most likely to use the results of the evaluation. Additionally, the program director is a champion and advocate for improving the foreign language teaching field, having devoted her career to working with language educators. She truly believes the program is ultimately making a difference for thousands of language learners across the country and want to continue to improve her program's ability to do so.

The secondary stakeholders for this evaluation are the faculty in the program and the administrators at the college. There are two full time faculty in the program, as well as a small team of adjuncts (the number will be anywhere between zero and three in a given semester). The faculty in the program can use the information provided by the evaluation to have a better understanding of whether their program is achieving its goals and how the program aligns with online course/program design standards. In addition, the faculty can use the evaluation findings to discuss the impact the program and students are having on the field of FLT. Administrators can use the information provided in the evaluation to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the program as well as to make decisions on funding, marketing, and promotion of the successes of the program.

The tertiary stakeholders for the evaluation for the program are the students of the program (past, present, and future). The students that complete the program are most often current Foreign Language teachers who have an interest in advancing their current careers. How evaluation findings are used by primary and secondary stakeholders will impact the experience of present and future students. Additionally, appropriately sharing salient results with past and current students will provide them with the confidence that they are part of a program and learning community that cares about its performance and is committed to the well-being of their students; this can increase confidence in the program as well as pride in being part of such a community.

Program Description

Due to the nature of the program being completely online, the vast majority of its students are active classroom instructors throughout their enrollment in the program, ranging from novices with 1-2 years of classroom experience to more experienced instructors. This program of study was intentionally designed to meet the needs of the professional Foreign Language educator who is looking to advance their career through their participation in the program. The program is a fairly small program in terms of faculty numbers, but it is the largest graduate program in the college in terms of student enrollments.

Program Inputs

As with all credit-based post-secondary programs, the program is a complex system encompassing a myriad of different inputs. This evaluation's logic model will only focus on the most salient ones.

- *Personnel*: The program is a fairly small program (one director, two full time faculty, a handful of adjuncts, and one graduate assistant), but it does have three dedicated full-time professors who teach exclusively in the program.
- *Curriculum*: All curriculum is planned, developed, and revised by the faculty as a team and aligned with the program goals.
- *Online Modality*: chosen intentionally to facilitate participation from working individuals.

- *Value Promise*: the university backs each online degree with a promise of a return on investment.
- *Small Class Size*: courses are small to ensure extensive interaction among students and with faculty.
- *Rolling admissions*: to increase program flexibility, new students are enrolled three times a year (summer, fall, and spring) and can proceed through course requirements at their own pace. There are no cohorts.
- *Language Center's vision, mission, support, and expertise*: the program is housed in a language learning-focused Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and benefits from a relationship with its staff and initiatives.
- *Funding Options*: the program offers a small number of assistantships and fellowships to support current students.

Program Activities

- *Required Courses*: Core Courses (24 credits); Final Portfolio (1 Credit); Experiential Module (5 credits). See Appendix 1 for a description of the course content.
- *Final Portfolio:* a public website showcasing a collection of each student's work during the program, which is also meant to serve as the student's Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive (Portfolio) Exam should be taken during the student's final semester in the program. This exam involves completion and presentation of the portfolio in the form of a well-designed website and evaluation of this website and its content by two faculty members.
- *Experiential Module:* in consultation with a faculty member, each student selects and completes a praxis-oriented capstone project designed to contribute substantially to career placement and advancement.

- *Virtual Conference*: as part of the Foreign Language Program Development and Administration course, students experience a realistic virtual professional conference, which includes writing proposals, rating others' proposals, and attending a conference with plenary speakers and regular sessions.
- *Commencement*: Students are invited to walk in person at the end of the program, and participate in tailored social experiences.
- *Recruitment efforts*: Faculty create marketing materials and manage social media accounts as a team.
- *Social Community Building Activities*: Faculty organize regular, ongoing virtual social gatherings with games and activities designed to promote social interaction among students.
- *Student selection and admission*: Faculty participate in the student admission process as a team.
- *Program promotion*: All faculty travel to professional conferences to promote the program and meet with prospective students.

Outputs

- *Master's Degree*: completing all requirements will result in participants obtaining a Masters of Arts degree from the institution.
- *FLT Certificate*: This option is available for students who do not wish to complete a full MA. Requirements include 3 courses selected from the FLT catalog and a web-based Final Portfolio.

Outcomes

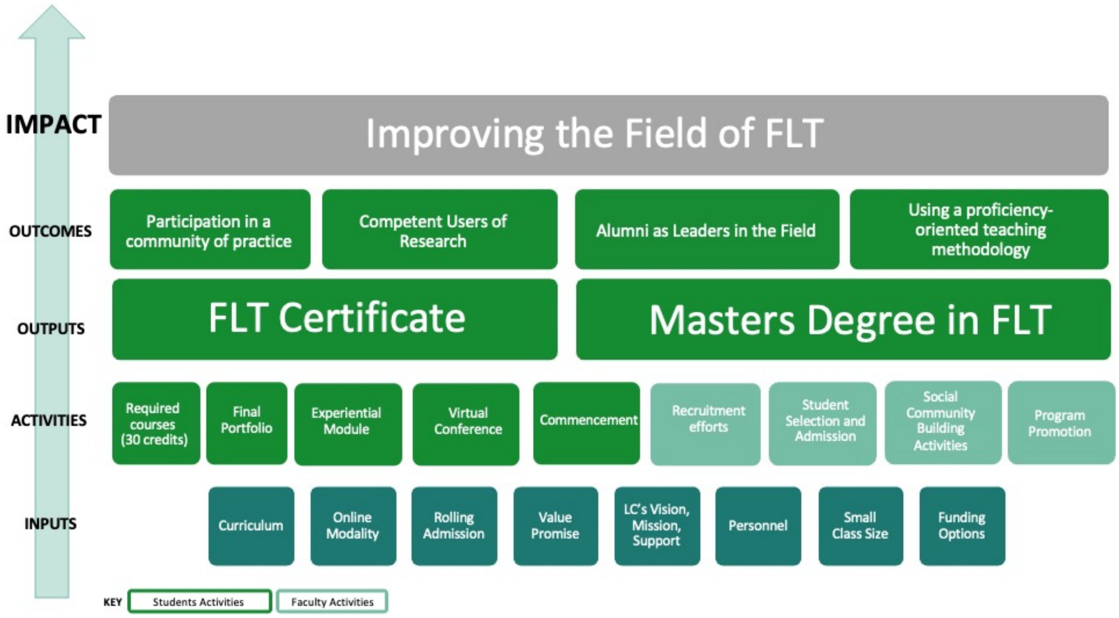
- *Participation in a community of practice*: throughout the program and after graduation, students will see themselves as active members of the language educator community at a local, state, and national level, as appropriate.
- *Becoming competent users of research*: Students will be able to comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and apply research results to their own professional practice.
- *Using a proficiency-oriented teaching methodology*: Students will employ proficiency-oriented approaches and techniques in their teaching practice.
- *Alumni as leaders in the field*: Program alumni are recognized by peers as being exemplary leaders in their own school, district, and/or state/national contexts, as appropriate.

Impact

- *Improving the Field of Foreign Language Teaching*: The vision of the program is to make a significant impact in the field by elevating the quality of language teaching in primary and secondary schools. More competent teaching and more informed advocacy will, in time, lead to more students achieving higher levels of proficiency in one or more foreign languages. This will also lead to an elevated perception of language teaching and learning across the country, which will in turn increase the demand for FLT both in terms of quantity and quality. A visual representation of the logic model is available in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The program's logic model



Evaluative Approach

This evaluation followed a program-oriented evaluation approach with participatory components. A program-oriented evaluation is a systematic and comprehensive assessment process designed to gauge the effectiveness, efficiency, or impact of a specific program or initiative. This evaluation approach focuses on the program itself, examining its objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes to determine whether it is achieving its intended goals. The evaluation's participatory components are inspired by Practical Participatory Evaluation, or P-PE (Cousins & Earl, 1992). In the spectrum of participant evaluation approaches, P-PE strives to find a balance of control between the evaluator and a few, key stakeholders who have a great deal of involvement at all stages of the evaluation process. While a true P-PE involves stakeholders actually participating in the evaluation process (i.e., creating data collection instruments, collecting and analyzing data, etc.), the current evaluation simply includes in its design ways for stakeholders to provide input at key stages in order to maximize ownership and utilization.

P-PE came about by looking at the relationship between evaluation design and subsequent use of findings. Cousins and Earl (1992) looked at 26 published evaluations and found that use of evaluation results is enhanced by communication, contact, and collaboration between evaluators and those stakeholders that are most interested in the results and are in a position to use them. Cousins and Earl (1992) also found that evaluative work done in this fashion begins to change the way that stakeholders think about their work, leading them to start looking at organizational processes with an evaluation lens. In other words, working closely with stakeholders will increase the likelihood that evaluative activities and ways of thinking will continue to be used in the organization.

The stakeholders who were involved in the participatory components of this evaluation were the director and the two core faculty members. To maximize the value of their contributions without demanding too much of their time, their help was requested at key points of the evaluation: the setting of the inquiry areas and evaluative questions, and the design of the data collection instruments.

Positionality Statement

I first began working with language educators and technology during my undergraduate, when I served as a technology faculty support for language instructors at Arizona State University. After earning a MA degree in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), I began working at the large Midwest institution in which the program is housed, where I have been holding various positions related to professional development and technology integration. I am currently employed in the Language Center, the same center that hosts the program, and in the last few years I have collaborated with the faculty team in both formal and informal ways: I have consulted several times with the program director on matters ranging from marketing to program development, and I have taught their Technology and Second Language Teaching course once.

Given my experience and relationship with the program, my perspective as an evaluator straddles the internal and external perspectives. From an internal perspective, I can capitalize on a deeper understanding of the inner workings of the program which has developed over the course of years being in proximity with the program and its staff, as well as an awareness of how the program has evolved over the years (when I started my position at the university, the program was only two years old). As the evaluation seeks to be primarily formative in nature, existing relationships with the faculty team also give me the ability to collaborate with them more effectively during the participatory elements of the evaluation.

Because I am not a full team member, I also bring an external perspective to the table. From this perspective, I can be confident of not needing to minimize negative findings because I have no personal interest in doing so. Along with objectivity, my unique perspective as well as the nature of this project as a dissertation project can minimize some of the most common drawbacks of internal perspectives, such as the lack of time to conduct evaluations, as well as those of external perspectives, such as diminished trust toward the evaluator and cost of hiring outside experts.

Evaluative Questions

Based on conversations with program stakeholders, this evaluation focused on two inquiry areas: Online Program Quality and Student Experience. The inquiry areas are discussed in more detail in the Literature Review and Method chapters. The following evaluative questions were used to guide the evaluation:

Q1: How is the program aligned with online learning standards of quality?

1. Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?
2. Are courses designed following recommended best practices?
3. Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?

Q2: What is the level of satisfaction with the program for current and past students?

1. To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?
2. What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?
3. Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Constructs and frameworks relevant to issues of quality in online learning and student satisfaction are addressed in this chapter.

Quality in Online Learning

Online learning has enjoyed exponential growth in the past two decades, but alongside the growth there have been several calls for more research on standards of quality in online education. This is a particularly important question for distance educator practitioners, given that program quality is directly linked to the success of an online program (Rovai & Downey, 2010).

Despite the frequency with which it is discussed, the construct of quality is a difficult one to define, with virtually no consensus among scholars and practitioners (Lederman, 2017; Shattuck, 2014). Each stakeholder may define quality according to the dimensions of online learning they value the most: cost-effectiveness and growth for administrators, learning outcomes for faculty, and the quality of the learning experience for students (Jung, 2011).

In his review of existing sets of quality standards, Esfijani (2018) found that, while there is considerable overlap between frameworks, most of them do not consider quality in its totality but look only either at a subset of perspectives (student, faculty, or admin) and/or a subset of all the possible standards. These findings were confirmed by Pedro and Kumar (2020) in their review of 13 online education quality frameworks. The researchers found that some categories appeared in all (technical support; continuous data collection and evaluation) or most (PD; course design standards; admin and academic support) frameworks, while others were less represented.

The Sloan-C Five Pillars of Quality

One of the more commonly used frameworks for measuring quality in online programs is the Sloan-C Framework (Moore, 2002), developed by the Sloan Consortium (now called the Online Learning Consortium). The Sloan-C Framework conceptualizes quality in online learning according to five categories or pillars:

- Access: the degree of ease with which learners can access the content, support, technology, or individuals they need at all stages of the educational process, from recruitment to graduation. This pillar includes effective practices in areas such as advising, technical support, and learning resources.
- Learning effectiveness: the degree to which a learning experience is able to lead to cognitive development and the achievement of learning outcomes. This pillar includes effective practices in areas such as course design, faculty development, interaction, and assessment.
- Cost effectiveness (or scale): the ability of a program to provide their best educational value to learners. This pillar includes effective practices in areas such as institutional commitment, leadership, institutional infrastructure, technical infrastructure, and marketing.
- Faculty satisfaction: the degree to which instructors find the online teaching experience personally rewarding and professionally beneficial. This pillar includes effective practices in areas such as institutional rewards, administrative support, and faculty support.
- Student satisfaction: the degree to which students are satisfied with all aspects of the educational experience. This pillar includes effective practices in areas such as course rigor and fairness, professor- and peer-interaction, and support services.

The five pillars have been used to evaluate online learning at the course, program, and institutional level (e.g., Fey et al., 2008; Stube et al., 2013). In 2010, a process was put in place to integrate the Sloan-C Framework with the Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance

Education (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000) and create an evaluation instrument that would make these standards easier to measure and implement. The instrument, named the OLC Scorecard, is the result of a Delphi study in which a panel of 43 experts agreed upon 70 quality indicators for online programs (Shelton, 2010). The quality indicators were organized into nine categories: institutional support, technology support, course development and instructional design, course structure, teaching and learning, social and student engagement, faculty support, student support, and evaluation and assessment. The scorecard provides a rubric for each category with descriptors at the deficient, developing, accomplished, and exemplary levels.

Interaction

The quality of interaction with faculty and peers is a primary indicator of student satisfaction (Gómez-Rey et al., 2016; Moore, 2002). Interaction in online learning, as a broad construct, has been investigated for several decades. Within distance education, interaction types are most commonly categorized as student-content, student-teacher, or student-student interactions (Moore, 1989):

- Student–student (SS) interaction focuses on interaction between individual students as well as students working together in groups. All activities that involve students discussing course-related topics or completing tasks together are SS interactions, whether synchronous or asynchronous.
- Student–teacher (ST) interaction focuses on dialogue between students and the instructor. Like SS, ST can be synchronous or asynchronous, and includes both dialogic (discussions and collaborations) and one-way (lecture) interactions.
- Student–content (SC) interaction refers to students interacting with the subject matter to construct meaning, relate it to previous knowledge, and apply it to projects or problems (Moore,

1989). There is a wide variety of activities that can be grouped under SC, including reading, conducting research, solving problems, completing projects, etc.

Moore (1989) encouraged educators to design instruction to maximize each of these types of interaction. Instruction designed to do so is considered an *interaction treatment*. Going further, Anderson, (2003) argued that at least one of the interaction types must be present in a course in order to ensure a deep and meaningful learning experience, and posited that a strong interaction treatment in one of the three categories could compensate for a weak or absent treatment in the other categories.

Bernard et al. (2009), in their meta-analysis of 74 interaction studies in online education, confirmed that intentionally designing interaction of any kind in a course greatly benefits learning achievement. This finding is consistent across all modes of delivery investigated (synchronous, asynchronous, and blended) but is most significant for asynchronous courses. The researchers also tested Anderson's (2003) claim that course designers can strengthen one interaction treatment while the others can be at a minimal levels or completely eliminated, but found that the only interaction type directly related to increased student learning was the SC interaction, which suggests that a strong course design with a focus on deep, meaningful interactions between student and content can substantially impact student achievement. These results are based on such a wide variety of instructional designs that they can't provide recipes for the design of online courses, but they can be used as guiding principles for courses that are designed with differing approaches.

What constitutes deep and meaningful interaction? Ertmer et al. (2011) argue that asynchronous discussions can be one of the most effective and efficient ways to promote both SC and SS interactions in an online environment. In their study of discussion posts from 10 different graduate and undergraduate courses, Ertmer and her colleagues found a relationship between the type of questions asked in a discussion prompt and the level of SC interaction displayed in student responses. More precisely, while certain kinds of questions, including *general invitation* and *brainstorm* questions, encouraged the most participation but produced limited level of critical thinking, other kinds of prompts, such as *analytical convergent*, *focal*, and *lower divergent* were able to produce an increased rate of responses at the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy (synthesis and evaluation). *Lower divergent* questions were most likely to generate medium and high levels of student thinking compared to other question types. The results of this study are a good reminder of the fact that deep, meaningful interaction, as well as critical thinking, do not happen automatically but can be encouraged to a great extent using well designed questions.

The Community of Inquiry Framework

One of the most frequently used frameworks in the study of online learning is the Community of Inquiry framework (CoI), originally developed by Garrison et al. (2000). Placed firmly in a constructivist epistemology and tradition, the model is built on the assumption that meaningful learning outcomes are more easily achieved when the educational experience is embedded in a collaborative community of inquiry in which reflective and critical thinking can be operationalized (Cleveland-Innes et al., 2019). A community of inquiry is a group of individuals (both educators and learners) who come together to engage in learning and reflection to 1) construct personal meaning and 2) confirm, challenge, and refine mutual understanding. This relationship among learners, according to the framework, happens along three dimensions or elements: *social*, *teaching*, and *cognitive presence*. To the extent to which these elements are present in a learning environment, they allow for an effective inquiry process and for higher-order learning to happen. Randy Garrison and his collaborators, in numerous publications, define the elements as follows:

- **Social presence:** the ability of participants to identify with the community of inquiry they are a part of, communicate purposefully in a trusted environment, and develop learning-centered interpersonal relationships by projecting their individual personalities.
- **Teaching presence:** the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes. While instructors are principally responsible for providing teaching presence, students can do so as well.
- **Cognitive presence:** the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse.

Research on the CoI framework has shown a strong link between each of the three elements and learning outcomes. Recently, Martin et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 19 studies on the correlation between CoI dimensions and learning outcomes (actual learning, perceived learning, and satisfaction). Results showed weak to moderate correlations between each type of presence and actual learning, and moderate to strong correlations between each presence and perceived learning as well as student satisfaction.

Joksimović et al. (2015) performed a multiple regression analysis on a large dataset of engineering students' discussion board posts and found that some indicators of social presence, like endeavoring oneself to move the conversation forward in a discussion thread, were significant predictors of academic performance. These researchers also found that teaching presence (in the form of scaffolding and redirecting of discussions) was a necessary condition for this relationship between social presence and learning outcomes to take place.

Similar conclusions have been reached by Liu et al. (2009) in their study of 353 community college students enrolled in online undergraduate courses. The researchers found that social presence as defined by the CoI framework is a significant predictor of both final course grade as well as course retention. Lastly, Yang et al. (2016) found similar relationships between all three elements (social, teaching, and cognitive presence) and learning performance, with cognitive presence playing the most important role.

Student Experience

For the purpose of this paper, the second inquiry area, student experience, is conceptualized as the sum of student satisfaction and student success. Both constructs are addressed by quality frameworks, with student satisfaction being a pillar of the Sloan-C Framework and student success considered an outcome of successful implementation of the pillars (Clark et al., 2009). However, student success is also discussed in the literature aside from considerations of quality, and so this construct will be considered here on its own.

Student success is the rate with which students who begin a course or program are able to complete it. While some researchers claim a higher dropout rate for online students compared to those enrolled in traditional courses (Boston et al., 2010; Shelton et al., 2017), others have demonstrated that students who take some or all of their coursework online are more likely to complete their degree compared to those who do not (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014). The research on student persistence and success is extensive, with researchers investigating internal factors (i.e., motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, etc.), contextual factors (employment, caregiving responsibilities, family support, etc.), curricular factors (interaction, relevance, satisfaction, sense of community), and demographic factors.

Indeed, the number of variables and related frameworks can be quite head-spin-inducing, especially considering many of them seem at first glance to be closely related or even partially overlapping. Generally speaking, much of the literature surveyed tends to set one or more of the abovementioned factors as the independent variable, and learning outcomes and/or learning satisfaction as the dependent variable. Student persistence and/or continuance intention is usually posited as a direct consequence of learning satisfaction (e.g., Rovai, 2002; Tseng et al., 2022; Waterhouse et al., 2022) and only sometimes considered a dependent variable (e.g., Park, 2007).

In their analysis of 147 learners, Park and Choi (2009) found that individual learner characteristics such as demographic or internal variables did not have a significant and direct effect on their dropout decision. Consistent with previous studies, contextual factors were a significant predictors of dropout, and course relevance, organizational support, and learning satisfaction had the largest effect on student persistence. Similarly, in their investigation of persistence in 369 online undergraduate students, (Tseng et al., 2022) found that connectedness had a significant impact on student satisfaction, which in turn had a significant and direct impact on students' intention to persist in their studies. Regarding the role of contextual factors, Waterhouse et al. (2022) surveyed 348 adult online learners in the UK and found that co-residing with children was significantly linked to lower levels of satisfaction.

Two frameworks stand out as helpful for framing the conversation around student experience: transactional distance and connectedness.

Transactional distance

Moore (1991) defined transactional distance (TD) as the "distance of understandings and perceptions, caused in part by the geographic distance, that has to be overcome by teachers, learners and educational organizations if effective, deliberate, planned learning is to occur" (p. 2). According to Moore, the three variables that influence transactional distance are:

- **Dialog**: the interactive back-and-forth between instructor and learner, or among learners. TD is lowered by increasing dialog.
- **Structure**: the amount of flexibility or rigidity afforded by the course design in terms of its responsiveness to learner needs. TD is lowered by lowering structure.
- **Learner autonomy**: the degree of autonomy enjoyed by learners over the educational and cognitive process. TD is lowered by increasing autonomy.

The introduction of the concept of TD was important in the scholarship of distance education because it allowed researchers to define distance learning based on its design features rather than geographical distance. TD elements should thought of as on a continuum, and are experienced differently by each individual learner (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

Transactional distance, as a framework, has been used extensively in the research on student outcomes, satisfaction, and success. Shelton et al. (2017) demonstrated that students that were not able to sustain consistent interaction and dialogue over the course of a semester were at a higher risk of dropout. Bolliger and Halupa (2018) found a moderate correlation between student engagement, transactional distance, and outcomes, and argued for the use of transactional distance as a predictor of student engagement. To measure TD, Zhang (2003) developed a scale and instrument that functions along these dimensions: transactional distance between student and student (TDSS), student and teacher (TDST), student and content (TDSC), and student and interface (TDSI). Later, Paul et al. (2015) revised Zhang's (2003) scale to reduce the number of items from 31 to 12 and improve its validity and reliability.

Connectedness

Hagerty et al. (1993) initially defined connectedness as "a person [being] actively involved with another person, object, group, or environment, and that involvement promot[ing] a sense of comfort, well-being, and anxiety-reduction" (p. 293). Connectedness allows students to experience higher levels of trust, cohesion, and interdependence with other students (Rovai, 2002) and allows them to feel like they are working towards their learning goals alongside other like-minded individuals. Connectedness helps students feel a sense of belonging within a group of learners. Additionally, learners experiencing high levels of connectedness are better able to regulate internal emotional and psychological processes (e.g., anxiety, self-esteem, identity, motivation) while engaging in cognitive activities (Lee & Robbins, 2018).

Connectedness has a direct, positive effect on motivation, and specifically on students' desire to participate in the knowledge-sharing process (Ergün & Avcı, 2018). As one would expect, connectedness is strongly related to student satisfaction and persistence in online learning (Hart, 2012; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Rovai, 2002). To measure the level of connectedness experienced by learners in an online learning environment, Bolliger and Inan (2012) developed an instrument called the Online Student Connectedness Survey (OSCS). The instrument consists of 25 items across four scales: community, comfort, facilitation, and interaction and collaboration.

Theoretical Approach of the Evaluation

The literature shows a strong relationship between measures of online learning quality and a positive student experience. The Sloan-C Pillars, together with the CoI Framework and the Interaction Framework, constitute a cohesive and comprehensive lens for analyzing all aspects of an online MA program, including student experience. Additionally, understanding factors impacting Transactional Distance and Connectedness should shed light on student experience issues, if any are found.

Rather than being a drawback, the conceptual overlap between the constructs and framework surveyed here should allow for more parsimonious data collection instruments. According to Practical Participatory Evaluation principles, I worked closely with stakeholders to identify and adapt sections of Scorecard that are most likely to yield useful, actionable, and relevant information. The rest of the frameworks informed the revision end expansion of data collection instruments and aided in the interpretation of the results.

Evaluative Questions

Each of the two inquiry areas that serve as the focus of the evaluation is targeted by a main question. In turn, sub-questions further focus the scope of the evaluation.

Q1: How is the program aligned with online learning standards of quality?

1. Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?
2. Are courses designed following recommended best practices?
3. Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?

Q2: What is the level of satisfaction with the program for current and past students?

1. To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?
2. What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?
3. Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?

Table 1 shows the alignment between each sub-question and its respective theoretical constructs and frameworks of interest. Those constructs and frameworks were utilized both as a source for instrument design and as a guide for interpreting data and compiling results and recommendations.

Table 1

Alignment between sub-questions, constructs, and frameworks

	Q1.1	*Q1.2*	*Q1.3*	*Q2.1*	*Q2.2*	*Q2.3*
OLC Scorecard (Rubric sections)	1, 2, 7, 8	3, 4, 9	5, 6			
Access Pillar	X			X	X	
Learning Effectiveness Pillar		X				X
Faculty Satisfaction Pillar	X					
Student Satisfaction Pillar	X			X	X	X
Community of Inquiry Framework		X	X			
Interaction			X		X	
Transactional Distance			X	X	X	
Connectedness				X	X	

Chapter Three: Methods

Study Design

As discussed above, this evaluation followed a program-oriented evaluation approach with participatory components. These are inspired by Practical Participatory Evaluation, or P-PE (Cousins & Earl, 1992). A participatory approach is, by design, responsive to the needs of the stakeholders, which means that exactly what stakeholder participation means is different for each project. Steps in which stakeholder participation was most helpful for this project were in the setting of evaluative questions and the design of data collection procedures and instruments. For this project, I involved stakeholders directly at those steps, as well as submitted regular updates to them.

This project is primarily conceptualized as a formative evaluation, as its results will be used by stakeholders to continue to improve the various aspects of the program under investigation.

Participants and Setting

The study participants are comprised of the faculty team as well as all students and alumni. Students and alumni are professional foreign language educators, primarily but not exclusively working in the K-12 system in the United States. All students and alumni (n=147) were invited to participate in the study, so no sampling was required. 51 student and alumni responded to the survey and, of those 51, 14 students and alumni participated in the interviews and focus groups. Table 2 shows a summary of the demographics of survey respondents.

Table 2

Survey demographics

Age	
25-34	37%
35-44	28%
45-54	26%
55 or older	9%
Graduation Year	
2015	2%
2016	7%
2017	4%
2018	9%
2019	13%
2020	13%
2021	7%
2022	15%
Attending now	30%
Place of residence while attending	
United States	83%
Non U.S.	17%
Courses per semester	
1	50%
2	50%
Hours/week worked while attending	
Not working	2%
Less than 10	4%
10 - 20	7%
21 - 30	2%
31 - 40	29%
More than 40	56%
Hours/week spent on MAFLT requirements	
Less than 5	4%
5 - 9	11%
10 - 14	53%
15 - 20	22%
More than 20	9%

Teaching Grade	
Pre-K	2%
K-2nd	1%
3rd-6th	5%
7th-8th	16%
9th-10th	30%
11th-12th	27%
Postsecondary	9%
Not employed as a language teacher	4%
Other	6%
Experience at matriculation	
More than 10 years teaching language	26%
6-10 years teaching language	16%
2-5 years teaching language	34%
Less than 2 years teaching language	2%
Some experience, but mostly part-time or tutoring	10%
Different subject area	2%
I worked in a different field	10%
Experience with Online Learning	
Previously completed a degree online	5%
I had taken online graduate courses	32%
I had taken some online courses during my undergraduate studies	14%
I had participated in online PD	22%
No online learning experience	27%
First Language	
English	56%
Spanish	13%
Japanese	10%
Chinese (Mandarin)	6%
Arabic	4%
French	4%
Other	4%
Korean	2%
Language Taught	

Teaching Context	
Private K-12	20%
Public K-12	29%
Postsecondary	11%
Not employed	9%
Tutoring	12%
Community	6%
Other	12%

Spanish	42%
French	16%
Japanese	15%
English	13%
German	5%
Arabic	4%
Chinese (Mandarin)	4%
Korean	2%

Data Sources

Based on stakeholder need, data collection for this project followed a mixed-method approach. During initial consultations, stakeholders expressed a desire to both capture broad data from a large number of student and alumni, as well as more granular, qualitative data to better understand individual students' experiences as they move through the program. Quantitative data was collected via student and alumni surveys, while qualitative data was collected through student, alumni, and faculty interviews. Existing course content and design also constituted a form of data which was analyzed using the Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR). The alignment between data collection instruments and evaluative questions is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Data Collection Instruments Alignment

	Student/Alumni Survey	*Faculty interviews*	*Alumni Interviews*	*Document analysis*
1.1: Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?	Section 1	TD 1		
1.2: Are courses designed following recommended best practices?		TD 2		Course Evaluation Rubric
1.3: Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?	Section 2	TD 3	TD 3	Course Evaluation Rubric
2.1: To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?	Section 3		TD1	
2.2: What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?	All sections		All domains	
2.3: Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?	Section 4		TD2	

Student and Alumni Survey

The initial language of the student and alumni survey was created drawing from the documents and framework discussed above (the OLC scorecard, the Sloan-C pillars, and Community of Inquiry, Interaction, Transactional Distance, and Connectedness frameworks). As a next step, the survey was distributed to the director and faculty for an initial round of feedback. After the stakeholders approved the survey, it was piloted with five graduate students from Indiana University's Ed.D. program. Their feedback was collected using a short form after they took the survey, as well as through brief interviews with each of the five graduate students.

The finalized version of the survey was distributed to the entire student and alumni list (n=147), so no sampling was required. The survey was distributed directly via email by the program director, and a reminder was sent two weeks after the initial email. The survey remained open for a total of four weeks. 51 student and alumni responded to the survey. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix 1.

Student and Alumni Interviews

Semi-structured student and alumni interview protocols were designed to collect additional qualitative data to answer Q2, and they were also created drawing from the documents and frameworks discussed in the literature review. The nature of a semi-structured interview allowed the evaluator to follow the information being provided by the interviewee in a less rigid manner. After the initial drafts were ready, student and alumni interview protocols were also distributed to the director and faculty for a round of feedback. The final version if the survey protocols was also informed by a preliminary analysis of the student survey data.

A student sample was selected using convenience sampling (i.e., students and alumni indicated in the survey whether they would like to be interviewed for this evaluation). 15 survey respondents indicated that they would be available to participate in an interview. To increase the number of students interviewed and accommodate language teachers' busy schedules, a mix of focus groups and individual interviews were scheduled based on participants' availability. Two focus groups with five and three participants respectively were conducted, as well as six individual interviews, for a total of 14 participants interviewed. A copy of the protocols is available in Appendix 2. Student and alumni interviews and focus groups took place over Zoom, a video conference software, and they were recorded and transcribed.

Director and Faculty Interviews

Director and faculty interview protocols were designed to collect data to answer Q1, and they were also created drawing from the documents and framework discussed in the literature review. The director protocol included all teaching and course design questions as well, because she is also a full-time faculty member in the program. As with the student and alumni interview protocols, director and faculty protocols were created using a semi-structured approach and focused based on preliminary analyses of the survey and student/alumni interview data. The entire faculty team (n = 3) was interviewed, so no sampling was required. A copy of the protocols is available in Appendix 2. Faculty interviews took place over Zoom and they were recorded and transcribed.

Document Analysis

To triangulate and fill in the gap in data from the survey and interviews, the evaluator reviewed a number of documents and analyzed a sample of existing courses. The following documents were reviewed:

- Program website
- Course descriptions
- Admission guide
- Program Handbook

The following courses were analyzed:

- Sociolinguistics and Spoken Language
- Assessment in FLT
- rogram Development and Administration

Courses were analyzed using OSCQR, an instructional design rubric developed by the State University of New York (SUNY) Center for Online Teaching Excellence (COTE), available as an open resource at https://oscqr.suny.edu. OSCQR is the preferred course evaluation rubric suggested by the OLC, as it is aligned with the larger set of criteria laid out in their scorecard (discussed in Chapter Two). The completed rubrics for each course are available in Appendix 3.

Procedure

The evaluation took place over the course of four academic semesters (Fall 2022 through Fall 2023). Data collection instruments and procedures were finalized and approved in Fall 2023. All data was collected in Spring 2023. Data analysis and compiling the report took place in Summer and Fall 2023. A detailed evaluation plan is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Evaluation Plan

Activities	**Outcomes**	**Fall 2022**				**Spring 2023**				**Summer 2023**				**Fall 2023**			
		S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	L	A	S	O	N	D
Finalize Evaluation Procedures	Review existing procedures and instruments	X															
	Revise design and instruments		X	X													
	Pilot, revise survey protocol			X	X												
	Revise interview protocols based on survey results							X									
Conduct Evaluation	Student and alumni survey open period					X	X										
	Identify student/alumni interviewees							X									
	Conduct student/alumni interviews and focus groups							X	X								
	Conduct director and faculty interviews								X	X							
	Collect document data					X	X	X			X	X					
Analyze Evaluation Data	Survey data						X	X					X	X	X		
	Student/alumni interview data (thematic analysis)												X	X	X		
	Document analysis												X	X	X		
Reporting	Writing final report													X	X	X	X

Data Analysis

Since the data collected and analyzed throughout this evaluation was both of qualitative and quantitative nature, this evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to data analysis.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive techniques to search for trends in the data as well as to identify those elements of the program are performing well and those who are not. Data was collected and analyzed using *Qualtrics,* a comprehensive data collection and analysis software. Besides looking at each question item in detail, each demographic characteristic was considered in isolation to determine whether group-specific trends were present in the data.

Interview data was recorded using *Zoom*, transcribed using *Otter.ai*, and analyzed and coded using *Atlas.ti*, a qualitative analysis software. Each interview was analyzed utilizing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, a first round of coding employed a deductive approach by using a set of codes created using OLC Scorecard criteria as well as additional relevant items from other constructs. Afterwards, open coding was used to allow additional codes and themes to emerge from the data. This additional round of coding allowed the researcher to identify additional themes that were not captured during the initial deductive coding step.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the results from the data obtained through the student and alumni survey, the student, alumni, and faculty interviews, and the document analysis in order to answer the following evaluative questions:

Q1: How is the program aligned with online learning standards of quality?

1. Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?
2. Are courses designed following recommended best practices?
3. Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?

Q2: What is the level of satisfaction with the program for current and past students?

1. To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?
2. What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?
3. Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?

First, the data regarding the program's alignment with existing quality criteria are presented, beginning with student and faculty support, continuing with course design, and concluding with an analysis of the substantive interaction occurring in the program. Then, data discussing the question of student satisfaction is presented. This section identifies both the program's strengths as well as areas that need improvement. The section concludes by reporting data on the program's impact on alumni's professional practice.

Program Quality (RQ1)

The first guiding question asked: How is the program aligned with online learning standards of quality? We will explore each sub-question in the section that follows.

1.1 Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?

The first sub-question will be answered in two sections, starting with data discussing the support received by the faculty. Investigating faculty support can shed light on the quality on a program by addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by faculty in the realm of online education, ensuring that their experiences are positive and rewarding. Faculty dissatisfaction in the context of online education can arise from various factors, many of which are shared with F2F teaching but can be exacerbated by the unique challenges of the online learning environment.

Overall, the faculty are satisfied with the level of support they receive, even though the data shows gaps in the support provided. Themes discussed during the faculty and director interviews reflected some of the major categories described in the Faculty Satisfaction Pillar (Technical support; Faculty responsibility/governance; and Institutional rewards) and will be discussed in that order.

Technical Support. Online faculty members require upfront course design support, training in online teaching skills, and ongoing technical assistance during course delivery (Moore, 2002). The primary finding in this area is that whatever technical support is available to faculty is usually provided by someone else on the teaching team. Faculty are expected to take care of course design, skill development, and troubleshooting largely on their own, and seek the expertise of one of their colleagues when in need of help. The director recalled how from the very beginning she and the other instructor at the time did not receive any ID support for creating materials and courses, and they had to teach themselves Instructional Design principles as new online instructors: “I didn't have people to go to who knew more than I did about [course design].” Ten years later, there still isn’t an official avenue for ID support, and the teaching team still relies on one another. Even though the team enjoys a positive working relationship, there is an awareness that overloading this support system can be problematic: “I know that [Faculty #1] would be willing to meet with me if I needed the help. But of course I feel bad taking their time to do it. So if I had another person who is devoted only to that, I would be, I would feel better to go to them and say, hey, I need you to walk me through where to click to build this page because I know that's their job.” [Faculty #2]

It's worth noting that faculty agree that the support that the institution does provide is much too basic. Both the basic, request-type technical support and the basic ID support now available does not match the needs of advanced online educators such as this program’s faculty. At the moment, faculty seem less interested in improving their teaching or technology skills, and more in the type of support that makes their life easier, either by taking some of their workload off of their plates or improving their workflow.

To this end, the program director has been building an extensive set of support resources and workflows (how-tos, handbooks, procedures, meeting minutes, projects, course change logs, etc.) supported by intentional use of technology (OneNote, Asana, Teams, SharePoint) starting with onboarding. These very strong systems built by the director do a good job support the functioning of the small faculty team, but they came at the cost of the director’s time and effort.

Faculty Responsibility and Governance. A primary indicator of faculty satisfaction in this area is whether faculty members consider maintaining the quality of curriculum and instruction as part of their duties. Research has shown that when institutions make decisions regarding online program curriculum, pedagogy, or policies without involving the faculty, it undermines faculty satisfaction (Moore, 2002). The program's faculty are firmly in control of curriculum decisions and enjoy a very productive collegial relationship in this area. What transpires from interviews is a tight-knit group of faculty who is always discussing, debating, and making decisions together, both during weekly faculty meetings and in an ongoing manner via Microsoft Teams. Faculty #3 reported that this dynamic allows the team to work quickly and tackle even difficult conversations:

> we can have those conversations, and we do have a unified view of what we think we're doing for these learners and where we think they're going and what we think that we really need to provide for them, and how that works, and how our courses feed into each other and how they build upon each other [Faculty #3].

Faculty #2 confirmed that the team "learn[s] from each other in a very organic way and I know this was intentional", and they are aware this kind of faculty cohesiveness may not be the rule in other program: "It may be something that is a given, but I don't think that can happen that easily depending on the program" [Faculty #2]. Both governance and curriculum are discussed as a team. Policies are often discussed among the faculty team, with a preference to have flexible, "in-conversation" approaches rather than rigid and formalized policies.

Curricular and course design decisions are the bulk of faculty meetings. During onboarding, faculty members discovered that the backbone of the curriculum, as well as a starter set of course materials, were already provided to them, with the understanding that with time each of them could start adapting their teaching materials to their preference and expertise. In this sense, each course has a captain, that is, a course lead or point-person who makes most of the curriculum decisions for that course so that it can be taught by others on the team or on the affiliate faculty pool.

These are strong indicators that the faculty is heavily invested in the curriculum and has the ability to steer the direction of the program. From interviews, there was some evidence that such a democratic approach can sometimes lead to disagreement in terms of how much freedom each individual faculty has to change the content of their own courses. Faculty #1 noted that

> if I had a critique of kind of where we are, is that I wish I had a little more freedom and less pushback on some of these things, where I don't necessarily feel like I always have the freedom to change what I want to change in my courses. And sometimes when I do change them, there is a little bit of tension. That being said, I think that that tension that is created is a sign of a somewhat healthy program. And then there, like, there's obviously, you know, both sides of us care about how the things that we're designing relate to the overall view, or the vision for the program, where a lack of tension would maybe suggest that, you know, maybe we don't care [Faculty #1].

As Faculty #1 notes, this kind of disagreement is healthy and does not usually lead to faculty dissatisfaction. Faculty #2 seconded the sentiment, suggesting that perhaps there isn’t enough time to make all curricular decisions together:

> in terms of discussing the content and talking about what we teach and how the courses align, we do that in our faculty meetings, but we obviously don't have enough time. So I think it's just finding the balance between the autonomy of us teaching what we want, but also making sure that those topics are aligned across all the courses is something that we strive for [Faculty #2].

Overall, faculty expressed a strong belief in mission and program effectiveness as a result of their curricular involvement: “I think we're doing a great job in terms of reaching our goals and helping teachers improve their craft” [Faculty #2].

Institutional Rewards. In general, faculty members juggle various time-consuming commitments, including research/publication, teaching, and service, with career prospects and status typically being influenced primarily by research/publication achievements; therefore, faculty tasked with dedicating additional time to online teaching can perceive a disadvantage when this duty clashes with activities that hold greater institutional value and offer higher rewards (Moore, 2002).

For this program’s faculty, satisfaction in this area is strongly undermined by institutional issues, as the university is still grappling with the institutional role and status of fully online programs. Because online programs were historically seen as primarily revenue-generating initiatives, they suffer from a variety of legacy administrative burdens, some of which are outside the scope of this evaluation. Relevant to our discussion it’s worth noting that institutional and college-level policies do not consider faculty of online programs eligible for the tenure system (they hold the status of Academic Specialist rather than Professor) or for the teaching union. Their contracts are 100% teaching and do not include research or service requirements. This impacts their job security, career prospects, and status within the institution.

Even though research is not part of their contract, the director encourages the faculty team to keep pursuing their research interests and makes space for it in the form of course releases when possible. She wants research and publication to be a priority for her team and has built a pool of affiliate faculty that can step in to teach a course when one of the core faculty is working on a different project. Additionally, she ensures there is alignment between individual scholarship and teaching assignments.

Discussion of student support findings will be separated in two parts: support received before joining the program and support received during the completion of the program. Both parts are supported by interview and survey data.

Student Support Before Joining the Program. Data from the student survey shows a significant gap in a few areas of advising support. As shown in Table 5, 39.6% of respondents did not have a chance to have a live conversation or discuss their prior online learning experience with a faculty member before the start of the program, and 35.4% did not discuss program expectations such as time commitment or academic rigor with a faculty member.

Table 5

Support Before Program Start

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding your experience before starting the program (n=48)	*Yes*		*No*	
I had a live conversation with a faculty member via phone or virtual meeting.	29	(60.4%)	19	(39.6%)
I discussed my experience and concerns with online learning with a faculty member.	29	(60.4%)	19	(39.6%)
I discussed program expectations (e.g., time commitment, academic rigor, etc.) With an advisor or faculty member.	31	(64.6%)	17	(35.4%)
I was informed about program technology requirements.	43	(89.6%)	5	(10.4%)
I was informed about admission requirements.	48	(100.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Before starting the program, I was informed about tuition and fees.	46	(95.8%)	2	(4.2%)
The student orientation (materials provided + live meetings) helped me prepare for online learning.	40	(83.3%)	8	(16.7%)

Data from student interviews paints a more nuanced impression, pointing to the fact that the processes of onboarding and orientation can often be often confusing from the student perspective. Students approaching the program for the first time after admission admitted to not being exactly sure what to do at first, and described the onboarding period as “really messy” [Student #9] and unclear. Students wished for more clarity both on the overall process of onboarding as well as specific details such as class start dates. One student commented on what seemed like peculiar silence at the beginning of their first semester: “I remember looking everywhere, for like, what am I supposed to do? I guess I should just wait to hear from somebody and I never heard from anybody” [Student #12].

From the perspective of the program, it seems like a lot of information is provided on startup. If that's true, why the confusion? The experience of Student 14 may provide some perspective. This particular student was trying to finish the program in two years, and so was going the extra mile to try to have a completed plan of study right at the very beginning:

> I didn't feel like I got a ton of advising, I felt very much like I was kind of figuring things out for myself. And it was possible, like going through the materials on the website … I had to go through all of this on my own, because I was motivated to finish it. As soon as I could, you know, I wanted to finish it in two years. And so I suppose I probably could have set up an appointment, and they would have been able to help me with that. But I didn't feel like there was anyone that was super available for that, you know, and when I first started the program, the one name I had was [the director’s], and she's the program director. And so she's very, very busy. And that was the one person that I knew to contact. And so she didn't have time to meet one on one with every single student and

> like map out their whole course, to be like, here's what you need to take first … it did take some brainpower and time to figure out on my own. [Student #14]

While Student 14 chose not to contact the director, other students reported doing so, and found the experience very positive and helpful, so it is worth reiterating that whatever lack of clarity exists during the onboarding process is not due to a lack of willingness to help on the part of the faculty team.

Student Support During Program. Data from the student survey shows that the support received by students as they move along the program is significantly better than that received before the program. Students largely agreed that support in the five areas surveyed (access to faculty, advising, technology support, guidance, and help) was adequate to their needs (see Table 6). The area of academic advising shows a slightly lower rate of agreement than the rest.

Table 6

Support During Program

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements (n = 47):	*Strongly disagree*		*Somewhat disagree*		*Neither agree or disagree*		*Somewhat agree*		*Strongly agree*		*Mean*	*SD*
Throughout the program I have had adequate access to guidance or tutorials that help me access course materials from online databases, the library, etc.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	1	(2.1%)	8	(17.0%)	36	(76.6%)	4.66	0.72
Throughout the program, faculty have been available to address my questions, problems, and complaints.	1	(2.1%)	1	(2.1%)	1	(2.1%)	6	(12.8%)	38	(80.9%)	4.68	0.8
Throughout the program, I have had access to effective academic advising.	1	(2.1%)	1	(2.1%)	5	(10.6%)	10	(21.3%)	30	(63.8%)	4.43	0.92
The program provided adequate guidance and/or tutorials in the use of technologies used for course delivery.	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	2	(4.3%)	8	(17.0%)	36	(76.6%)	4.68	0.66
When I needed help, I knew how to ask for help.	1	(2.1%)	0	(0.0%)	3	(6.4%)	5	(10.6%)	38	(80.9%)	4.68	0.77

Student interviews confirmed that the support provided by the program was enough. It is telling that, when asked about support and advising received, most interview participants that had issues to relate ended up discussing gaps in advising before the program rather than during the program. It seems that, once the initial onboarding was done (whether smoothly or not), moving along the program became easier, primarily because of the ease and speed with which students could ask for support to the faculty themselves. The one area that did come up in discussions is again academic advising, showing that treating pre-program advising and in-program advising as two conceptually separate areas may not be entirely accurate. Student 9's experience seems to show that pre-program advising issues continue to affect students as they move along the program:

> going through [the program] has also been slightly confusing … there's advice like, oh, you aren't supposed to do your experiential module and your portfolio at the same time, or you're supposed to take this class and this class at the same time. But I had both of those setup in my plan that I set up with [the director] at the beginning of my studies, and nothing was said about like, maybe you shouldn't do that until I got into the semester. And then it was like, oh, yeah, I recommend people don't do this. And I was like, that has been the plan for like, a year and a half? So then I was like, you know, why didn't we talk about this a year and a half ago, and I ended up dropping one course, just because I felt really overwhelmed with the two courses … so I think, yeah, the advising has been a little bit less helpful than I would love for it to be [Student #9].

1.2. Are courses designed following recommended best practices?

To answer the second sub-question, a sample of three courses (one for each faculty member) was analyzed using the OSCQR rubric. By and large, the courses reviewed were of very high quality, were clearly designed to maximize the affordances of online learning (as opposed to simply transposing F2F courses to the online modality), and demonstrated very high competence in online curriculum development and online teaching. Noteworthy in each of the courses are the significant amount of student-instructor and student-student interaction built in, and the authenticity and relevance of the assessment methods employed.

One area that seems somewhat consistently problematic is accessibility. Reading materials and media from two of the courses were consistently inaccessible to individuals with disabilities, and a few accessibility issues were found in the third course as well.

What follows is a brief summary of each course review, which will note the courses' primary strengths as well as most significative issues when applicable. Complete assessment rubrics for each course are available in Appendix 3, which will include additional revision suggestions for course developers.

Assessment in FLT. This course serves as a general introduction to language testing and assessment. Topics covered range from small, formative classroom assessments to large-scale high stakes testing, but the course devotes most of the time to developing students' practical assessment skills so they can use them in their context. To this end, students develop task-based and performance-based assessment tools for classroom instruction throughout the course, and the final assignment consists of students designing an assessment instrument geared towards their own context. The instructor designed regular, weekly student-student and student-content interaction around video lectures, readings, and discussion boards. The final project is scaffolded throughout the course, so that students receive several rounds of feedback on their work. The majority of the course materials and activities are accessible, although a few videos in the introduction module lack captioning.

Program Development and Administration. This course is designed to move language instructors' focus from the classroom to the larger ecology of language instruction, with a primary focus on local and district-level language program development, administration, and evaluation, but also with an eye to larger issues such as advocacy and the field of FLT at a national level. The course is built on a strong weekly routine of readings, discussions, and activities, with large course assignments woven in and well scaffolded. The strength of the course lies in the relevance and authenticity of its major assignments: compiling a set of professional materials; interviewing a series of professionals and writing a report; conducting a small-scale program evaluation at the students' workplace (in pairs/groups); and participating in a one-day virtual conference that includes the process of submitting a proposal, receiving feedback, and delivering a presentation. Several accessibility issues were identified in the course: a number of reading materials are delivered as scanned PDF files, which are not accessible by screen readers and present a hard accessibility barrier to visually impaired individuals; likewise, video lectures do not provide captions or transcripts, rendering them inaccessible to the deaf or hard of hearing.

Sociolinguistics and Spoken Language. This course provides language instructors with the tools to understand and address the needs of language learners related to sociolinguistic competence. The course covers topics such as language variation and change, the use of language to define individual identities and group membership, and the influence of power and policies on languages themselves and their users. Although the topic of the course could be seen as more academic or theoretical than those of other courses in the program, course assignments (such as a language classroom analysis) help students to readily connect topics to their own language and teaching context. Students have plenty of opportunities to have meaningful interactions with peers and the instructor. Several accessibility issues were identified in the course: a number of reading materials are delivered as scanned PDF files, which are not accessible by screen readers and present a hard accessibility barrier to visually impaired individuals; likewise, video lectures do not provide captions or transcripts, rendering them inaccessible to the deaf or hard of hearing.

The high quality of instruction observed during course analysis is in line with faculty's intentionality that transpires from interviews. Faculty are strong believers in the effectiveness of online education and intentionally design their curriculum giving consideration to authenticity, alignment, and interaction. As already evidenced in the discussion about the first sub-question, curriculum design is often a team effort, with quality checks and feedback loops built in the development process:

> for quality control, we have things where other teachers teach our courses, or like [Faculty #2] will sit in on my classes, and after that I generally have conversations with them and saying, Hey, what did you like, What didn't you like? What can we improve on? What can we expand on? [Faculty #1]

When asked about their understanding of online course quality, all faculty members had clear ideas of what the construct meant for them, often mentioning several salient aspects of online course design that are frequently mentioned in the literature such as clarity, alignment between objectives and materials, ease of navigation, and opportunities for feedback and interaction. Either through experience or professional development (likely both), faculty have developed a strong sense of instructional quality that informs their work:

> I think quality in the sense that the students need to know what to expect … every week when they open a module they see the same sequence. So just that repetition and consistency. I think it's important, just for their user experience and navigation, they don't have any surprises. And if something different changes, I have to be able to explain why in the announcement before they simply go there and be surprised … Another aspect of quality I think, is scaffolding the assignments well. So I build a lot of opportunities for them to rewrite and draft so that I can adjust those expectations with my feedback. So every project has at least two drafts so that they don't feel like, Oh my God, I have no idea what I'm doing and then I have to deliver this. And I always say feel free to ask questions in the document, even if you're not sure. [Faculty #2]

Not only are faculty well aware of course quality notions, they also remain flexible to student feedback on their course design and teaching choices:

> I personally have informal check ins with my students, where I ask them about workload and how they're feeling and how relevant certain materials are. And that's just through regular conversations with students. But I also do a thing where I give them anonymous surveys after each module, or I ask students to comment on whether or not the material was too difficult, whether it was engaging or interesting, how useful they found it, how much time they spent on it. [Faculty #1]

This data, when appropriate, informs team discussions on curriculum matters, so that none of the faculty work in isolation and all faculty benefit from student feedback.

1.3. Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?

To answer the third sub-question, data from the student and alumni survey as well as from all focus groups and interviews will be utilized. Table 7 and show student responses to questions about their engagement with peers and faculty. Data shows that, in general, students are engaged in a fair amount of high quality interaction both with their peers and their instructors, although two specific areas emerge as potentially problematic: the development of meaningful relationships with their peers, and the ability to receive timely feedback. The former will be discussed below; because the latter was consistently mentioned as a dissatisfaction area, it will be addressed when discussing results regarding RQ 2.2.

Table 7

Student Engagement

Please rate your agreement with the following statements (n = 47)	*Strongly disagree*		*Somewhat disagree*		*Neither agree nor disagree*		*Somewhat agree*		*Strongly agree*		*Mean*	*SD*
Within each course, interaction with other students is encouraged.	1	(2.1%)	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	7	(14.9%)	37	(78.7%)	4.68	0.75
The way courses are designed and set up makes it easy to interact with other students.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	4	(8.5%)	11	(23.4%)	30	(63.8%)	4.47	0.82
Within each course, interaction with faculty members is encouraged.	0	(0.0%)	4	(8.5%)	0	(0.0%)	11	(23.4%)	32	(68.1%)	4.51	0.87
The way courses are designed and set up makes it easy to interact with faculty.	2	(4.4%)	2	(4.4%)	0	(0.0%)	9	(20.0%)	32	(71.1%)	4.49	1.02
Faculty feedback on my assignments is constructive.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	0	(0.0%)	11	(23.4%)	34	(72.3%)	4.64	0.7
Faculty feedback on my assignments is timely.	1	(2.1%)	7	(14.9%)	1	(2.1%)	15	(31.9%)	23	(48.9%)	4.11	1.13
The program provides opportunities to interact with other students outside of regular course activities.	5	(10.6%)	4	(8.5%)	7	(14.9%)	13	(27.7%)	18	(38.3%)	3.74	1.33
I have gotten to know some of the faculty members well.	0	(0.0%)	5	(10.6%)	5	(10.6%)	13	(27.7%)	24	(51.1%)	4.19	1
I have gotten to know some of my classmates well.	5	(10.6%)	5	(10.6%)	10	(21.3%)	10	(21.3%)	17	(36.2%)	3.62	1.35
I was comfortable participating in course discussions on D2L and/or Teams.	2	(4.3%)	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	12	(25.5%)	32	(68.1%)	4.53	0.9
I was comfortable participating in discussions during virtual meetings.	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	6	(12.8%)	13	(27.7%)	27	(57.4%)	4.4	0.79

I was comfortable participating in collaborative/team activities.	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	7	(14.9%)	10	(21.3%)	29	(61.7%)	4.43	0.82
I was comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	9	(19.1%)	15	(31.9%)	21	(44.7%)	4.17	0.88
Participating in online discussions helped me appreciate different perspectives.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	9	(19.6%)	6	(13.0%)	29	(63.0%)	4.35	0.94
The way course topics were presented motivated me to explore them in depth.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	3	(6.5%)	12	(26.1%)	29	(63.0%)	4.48	0.8
Engaging in the program's learning activities was instrumental in deepening my perspective of the field.	0	(0.0%)	3	(6.4%)	0	(0.0%)	6	(12.8%)	38	(80.9%)	4.68	0.77
Faculty were helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that helped me clarify my thinking.	1	(2.1%)	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	9	(19.1%)	35	(74.5%)	4.64	0.76
Faculty helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	7	(15.2%)	11	(23.9%)	26	(56.5%)	4.33	0.89
Faculty encouraged the development of a sense of community among course participants.	1	(2.1%)	2	(4.3%)	5	(10.6%)	10	(21.3%)	29	(61.7%)	4.36	0.98

Student willingness to take advantage of existing interaction opportunities was quite varied, as shown in Table 8, although in general students were reticent to take advantage of interaction opportunities. Students mostly participated in interactions with faculty, such as office hours and communicating with faculty via teams, but were less willing to participate in virtual meetings and midweek meetups as well as connecting with peers outside of class.

Table 8

Use of Interaction Opportunities

How frequently do/did you take advantage of the following interaction opportunities? (n = 47)	*Rarely or never*		*Sometimes*		*Often*		*As frequently as possible*		*Mean*	*SD*
Office Hours	16	(34.0%)	18	(38.3%)	8	(17.0%)	5	(10.6%)	2.04	0.97
Virtual meetings	22	(47.8%)	17	(37.0%)	4	(8.7%)	3	(6.5%)	1.74	0.87
Communicating with faculty via Teams	15	(32.6%)	10	(21.7%)	13	(28.3%)	8	(17.4%)	2.3	1.1
Communicating with peers via Teams	19	(41.3%)	13	(28.3%)	9	(19.6%)	5	(10.9%)	2	1.02
Connecting outside class	25	(53.2%)	19	(40.4%)	2	(4.3%)	1	(2.1%)	1.55	0.68
Midweek Meetups	38	(80.9%)	7	(14.9%)	1	(2.1%)	1	(2.1%)	1.26	0.6

The Midweek Meetups drew by far the least amount of interest among survey participants. In one of the focus groups, Student 7 discussed this issue in terms of their existing commitments, explaining that between work and school, they were having a hard time making space for additional, non-required activities:

> I know that within the program, they're trying to encourage us to get to know classmates, especially with the midweek meetups they've been doing. But then as some of us have said, you know, like a lot of us are working, I also have been taking just one course at a

> time. So as much as I would like to do that, it's just kind of you're like, you know, that's just maybe not what I want to do with my week. But I know the intention is there, which I appreciate [Student #7].

Peer Interaction. Students report enjoying positive, supportive interactions with their peers, especially within the courses themselves. At the same time, a majority of interview participants admitted to not being able to get to know their classmates well or find the connection or camaraderie they were hoping for. There's a clear sentiment among several students that the program lacked opportunities for meaningful connections among peers. Many felt that the structure of the program, while emphasizing collaboration and dialogue, didn't foster a strong sense of camaraderie or deeper relationships outside of course assignments. Interestingly, students who did experience deeper connections often attributed it to the mandatory group project in the Program Administration and Evaluation course. Unlike other opportunities for interaction, group projects require students to work together to produce an outcome used to evaluate all group participants. In other words, group participants are forced to work together and have to figure out a way to make the group interaction work. Students 2, 3, 4, 8, and 12 all found that participating in this group project forced interaction among group members and provided a platform for building relationships. Student 12 specifically pointed out the distinction between optional social meetups and required group projects, indicating a preference for the latter due to its inherent importance and the necessity of collaboration.

However, interview participants expressed contrasting views on their desire to create deeper connections. Some students prioritized autonomy and flexibility in their learning over social interaction. Student 14, for instance, valued the program's independence and felt that more group work might compromise flexibility, despite acknowledging its potential for fostering social connections. Challenges with coordinating schedules across different time zones and work commitments also emerged as significant hurdles to effective peer interaction. Some students acknowledged personal responsibility for not proactively engaging with peers, highlighting the difficulty in organically fostering connections in an online learning environment.

In sum, several students acknowledged the lack of peer connection experienced in the program, but expressed differing opinions on whether this was to be expected in an online program or not, whether it was the students' or the faculty's responsibility to build those relationships, and whether making more connections would be worth the effort of participating in more group projects. Student 10 poignantly summarizes the sentiment expressed by many of their peers:

> Now [peer connection] was the weakest part of the program. No doubt, no doubt at all. You think you're going to come out with a camaraderie. Because you are in a cohort together, you're studying together… but that didn't seem to be a priority now… [Faculty #3] did tell us to work together, [they] always encouraged that, [they] always say, work with your peers. But in terms of a process, the only process we had was when we did things, we work together in our projects. But it was very siloed, very isolated. You do this part, I do that part… I left the program and I don't have one person that I would call on to work with or to you know, there's some I think I would involve myself in presentations, if I were had a closer camaraderie. I think I would get more. I think I could move forward in a different way than I than I did after the program [Student #10].

How do faculty frame the issue of student interaction? Course analyses confirm that, while students interact frequently with peers in discussion forums, by providing feedback to one another, and sometimes in live meetings, larger-scale group projects are less frequent. In the three courses observed, only one (Program Development and Administration) requires students to work on a group project together (a program evaluation). In that course, students also interview each other as part of a series of interviews they are required to report on.

From the faculty's perspective, peer interaction is important, but perhaps not as essential as interaction with faculty:

> I think teacher to student is probably the priority, in my opinion, they need to see that there's a real teacher there who is actively engaging with their materials and with them. Otherwise, it's just a canned course that you run into a lot of those issues, you need that human interaction, you need to feel like somebody's invested in you as much as they're invested in this program. So I think that that, I put most of my efforts into that. That's why I say things like I want to always be available… Now, the student interaction, I think is also incredibly, incredibly important. But I don't know if I'll go as far as to say that it is a must have, just largely because it's so difficult to get student interaction… you can get asynchronous student to student interaction, It's just not as rich as synchronous or as a real time, it doesn't give you the same sort of bang for your buck, if you get what I'm saying. Obviously getting more of that, and that's something that all students say, we want more student to student interaction, but at that same time that they say that they also go, oh, but we're so busy. [Faculty #1]

> The one thing I can control is teacher student interaction, I can control that 100%. If you reach out to me, I can respond. Whatever you provide, I can provide feedback, student to student interaction, I can design, I can design activities, I can design the settings, but I can't force that. And so they're both important. And they both lead to better programs. But you know, if I'm going to place my efforts and priorities into one, it's going to be [faculty-student interaction] [Faculty #1].

Faculty Interaction. Students are generally enthusiastic about their interaction with faculty. Faculty members are competent, available, personable, and supportive. Many students underscored how positive their relationship with Faculty #3 was. Student 13 referred to them as "inspiring", while student 12 was impressed by their generosity and willingness to help.

Faculty interviews show that this kind of attention is intentional. All members of the faculty teams pride themselves for the intentionality with which they are present for the students. Faculty #2 clearly and intentionally adopts a posture of openness and availability towards their students, while Faculty #1 makes a point to have a personalized response to any student deliverable.

At the same time, a careful look at interview data shows that students had mixed experiences with faculty interaction. Student 14, who described themselves as a more self-sufficient, independent learner, acknowledged that professors were available when needed, although they didn't personally take advantage of this very frequently. Other students, like Student 9, struggled with inconsistent responsiveness from different faculty members, which impacted their learning experience. The lack of clarity in instructions and delayed responses posed significant challenges, especially in an online learning environment where prompt communication is crucial:

> I had a hard time sometimes adapting to some teachers being super responsive, and some being very unresponsive. That honestly is probably my biggest challenge in this program, just having really inconsistent understanding of what was appropriate for me to expect. [Student #9]

> Clarity of instruction sometimes was really challenging. Whereas in a class, you can just say, like, Hey, I don't get this, can you explain it to me? This way, if I couldn't get a response virtually, like if I sent a message and didn't get a response, sometimes it could take two days. And if we're on a week cycle, and I have my scheduled were like, maybe those are the two days I do most of my work. That's, that was the hardest part for me was just really like not knowing when I was gonna get replies and then trying to figure out how do I move forward without having this answer? So yeah, I had to kind of, yeah, I had to learn how my teachers replied and how they responded and anticipate things in advance. And sometimes work ahead so that I gave myself a cushion. If I needed to wait for a reply, that's really my hardest thing. [Student #9]

Student Satisfaction (RQ2)

The second research question asked: What is the level of satisfaction with the program for current and past students? In this section, we will discuss each sub-question in turn.

2.1. To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?

Overall, students are very satisfied with their experience with the program. Table 9 show student satisfaction for each of the program areas surveyed. A small percentage of students expressed dissatisfaction with their ability to get in touch with faculty members (4.3%) and the timeliness of faculty's replies (8.5%). These will be discussed in RQ 2.2.

Table 9

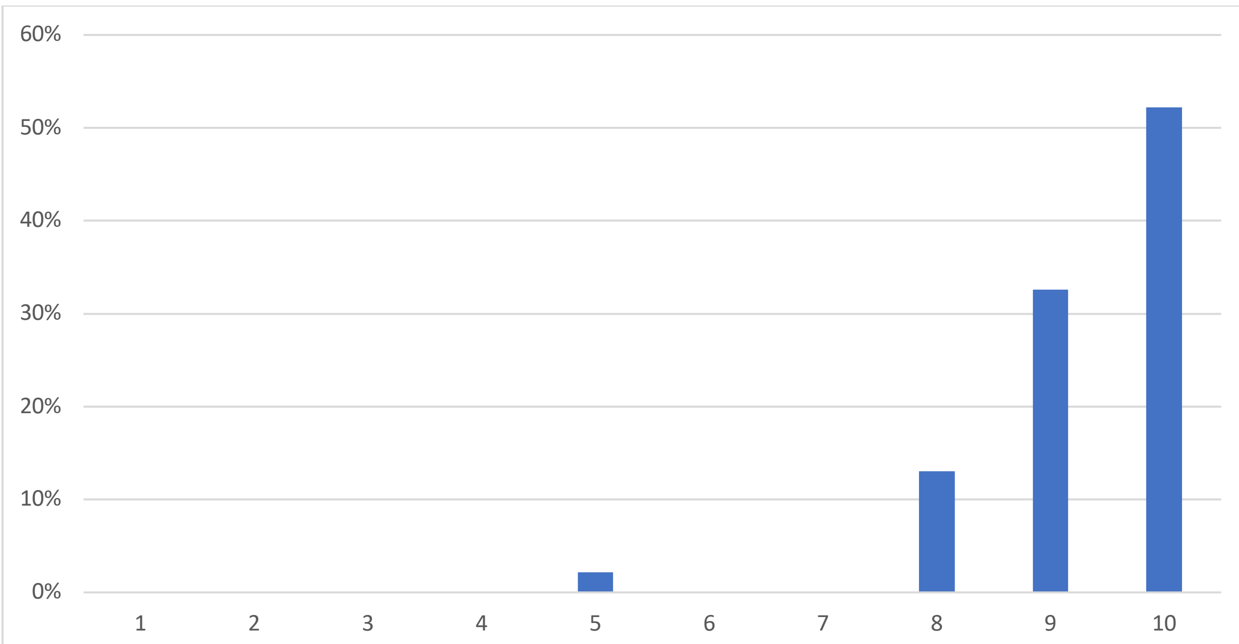
Student Satisfaction

Please rate your agreement with the following statements (n = 47):	*Strongly disagree*		*Somewhat disagree*		*Neither agree nor disagree*		*Somewhat agree*		*Strongly agree*		*Mean*	*SD*
The program is well organized.	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	1	(2.1%)	10	(21.3%)	35	(74.5%)	4.68	0.62
Faculty are knowledgeable about the subject matter.	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.2%)	2	(4.4%)	43	(93.5%)	4.91	0.35
It is easy to get in touch with faculty.	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	3	(6.4%)	3	(6.4%)	39	(83.0%)	4.68	0.77
Faculty respond to my inquiries in a timely manner.	1	(2.1%)	3	(6.4%)	1	(2.1%)	7	(14.9%)	35	(74.5%)	4.53	0.96
Course requirements are easy to understand.	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	8	(17.0%)	37	(78.7%)	4.74	0.52
Learning materials are relevant to professional needs.	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	2	(4.3%)	6	(12.8%)	38	(80.9%)	4.72	0.64
Course assignments are relevant to my professional needs.	1	(2.1%)	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	10	(21.3%)	34	(72.3%)	4.62	0.76
I am regularly able to apply what I learned during the program into my practice.	1	(2.2%)	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.4%)	10	(21.7%)	33	(71.7%)	4.61	0.77
The number of students in each course section allows for meaningful engagement with the instructor.	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	4	(8.5%)	5	(10.6%)	38	(80.9%)	4.72	0.61
Faculty care about my learning journey.	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.1%)	3	(6.4%)	43	(91.5%)	4.89	0.37

When asked to rate their likelihood of recommending the program to their peers, students' response was overwhelmingly positive, with an average recommendation of 9.3 out of 10 (n = 46). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of student ratings.

Figure 2

Likelihood of recommending the program (n = 46)



Interview data confirms that students were very satisfied with most aspects of their experience. In particular, students were extremely satisfied with the quality of the curriculum, both in terms of individual courses and for the program as a whole. Several interviewees noted that the program provided them with the right balance of theory and practice, stretching their knowledge, challenging preconceived notions or teaching myths they might have been holding on to, and providing them with actionable skills and knowledge to use in their professional contexts. Students also pointed out that all faculty were of really high caliber but at the same time very available and supportive. Students valued the connections they formed with faculty members, feeling encouraged to engage and seek guidance whenever needed. The program's structure and organization were also regularly praised, and students expressed satisfaction with the logical progression of courses and their alignment with learning objectives.

Students also emphasized the program's compatibility with their professional lives. The ability to balance coursework with full-time work while finding direct application for their assignments within their teaching contexts added immense value to their overall experience. A few salient quotes illustrate students' overall opinion on the program:

> My personal experience was overwhelmingly amazing… The professors made themselves very, very, very beyond accessible to us to the point that I finished my masters in maybe four plus years, I really took my time. But they were really encouraging me to come for the graduation… when I went there, it felt like I knew them very well [Student #1].

> I am also very satisfied with my experience with the program. I've been teaching a long time and I started the program with a particular agenda, with a very strong bias about something and I left the program, you know, not so biased. So it helped open up. I had done a lot of reading in a particular area, but the program made me aware of the bigger picture in SLA, bigger issues that I should also consider. So yeah, I was very satisfied [Student #3].

> I need there to be a lot of intellectual challenge to keep me engaged. And I found that very much. I think this program works really well with sort of meeting students where

> they're at, like, I think, especially [Faculty #1], [they were] really able to see what somebody can do and challenge them wherever they were at. So I feel like for me, some courses were better at that than others. But I've grown a lot as a teacher through this program. And I've grown a lot, I think, as just a student too… I got a lot more exposure to different ideas and different methodologies through this program than I would have necessarily in servicing in one classroom. After I already had a very good foundation of teaching. This program definitely did so much more than I thought it would do [Student #9].

2.2 What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?

As discussed above, survey and interview data brought to light a few areas of dissatisfaction for students: forming connections with peers, inconsistencies and gaps with advising and onboarding, and issues with timeliness of communication and feedback. Results related to the former two areas were reported above in RQs 1.3 and 1.1. Results regarding the latter issue with be reported now.

As shown in Table 7, 17% of survey respondents did not think the feedback from faculty was received in a timely manner, and data from Table 9 shows that 8.5% of respondents did not think faculty had responded to their inquiries in a timely manner. While these numbers do not represent a large group of students, they are indicative of a potentially significant issue in this area. Excerpts from interviews seems to confirm these findings, with at least four students reporting issues with timeliness of feedback and communication:

What hasn't met my expectations… is that sometimes I would want feedback on something and might not receive it for a few weeks [Student #6].

I think, with [Faculty #3], I have struggled the most, really, a lot. And so I kind of approach my courses with [them] as more independent. And then [they'll] do a lot of very intense feedback, but really all at once. And then sometimes it's overwhelming… And again, whenever I talk with [them], I can feel [their] passion, I can feel I know how much [they] know. But sometimes I think [they are] so overwhelmed, and so overtaxed that, when [they] deliver things, it can be like a barrage of information. And then it's like, oh my gosh, that's so much to take in and so many things to fix at once. But where was all that the last four weeks when I was working on this… As a teacher, I aspire to be more like [Faculty #1], where I'm getting the consistent, smaller amounts of feedback that are actionable, that then lead me towards what [they are] hoping me to produce at the end. [Student #9]

There was one or two courses where I felt like I didn't get really any feedback the entire course. And that was really hard for me [Student #14].

Whenever I emailed them, and maybe I will repeat what [Student #6] said, sometimes the feedback maybe wasn't fast enough from certain people. I know how people are busy… But yes, sometimes earlier feedback would be fantastic [Student #8].

2.3 Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?

In order to determine the extent of the program's impact on alumni's professional practice, it is important to first establish what kind of impact students and alumni are actually looking for. Data from the student and alumni survey shows that the four most important goals for students as they proceed through the program are: enhancing their effectiveness as language educators; improving career opportunities; improving salary or earnings; and learning more about theory and research related to SLA. Other goals, such as pursuing leadership positions, fulfilling a requirement for a position or certification, or connecting with a community of fellow teachers, are still important but not predominantly so. Table 10 reports survey respondents' importance ratings on a variety of goals.

Table 10

Goal Importance

For each of these personal goals, please rate its importance for you (n = 45)	*Not important*		*Somewhat important*		*Very important*		*Mean*	*SD*
Start a career as a language teacher	24	(53.3%)	6	(13.3%)	15	(33.3%)	1.8	0.91
Enhance my effectiveness as a language educator	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	45	(100.0%)	3	0
Connect with a community of fellow teachers	8	(17.4%)	25	(54.4%)	13	(28.3%)	2.11	0.67
Improve job/career opportunities	5	(10.9%)	9	(19.6%)	32	(69.6%)	2.59	0.68
Improve salary/earnings	3	(6.5%)	15	(32.6%)	28	(60.9%)	2.54	0.62
Learn more about theory and research related to SLA	3	(6.5%)	8	(17.4%)	35	(76.1%)	2.7	0.58
Move into or prepare for leadership positions	15	(32.6%)	15	(32.6%)	16	(34.8%)	2.02	0.82
Prepare me to apply to a doctoral program	27	(58.7%)	12	(26.1%)	7	(15.2%)	1.57	0.74
Prepare me to conduct research in my field	21	(46.7%)	16	(35.6%)	8	(17.8%)	1.71	0.75
Fulfill a requirement for a position or certification	18	(40.0%)	8	(17.8%)	19	(42.2%)	2.02	0.91
Complete coursework for another graduate program	41	(90.9%)	1	(2.3%)	3	(6.8%)	1.16	0.52
Improve my standing with my peers locally	21	(45.7%)	13	(28.3%)	12	(26.1%)	1.8	0.82
Improve my standing with my peers nationally	22	(47.8%)	13	(28.3%)	11	(23.9%)	1.76	0.81

How does the program perform on helping students and alumni achieving their goals? 78.3% of respondents agree that the program is very effective at enhancing their effectiveness as language educators and helping them learn more about SLA theory and research, while the consensus is less strong in terms of career opportunities (42.2%) and salary improvement (43.5%), although roughly 35% of respondents agree that the program is somewhat effective at helping students achieve those two goals. Table 11 reports students' opinions on the program's perceived effectiveness for a variety of goals.

Table 11

Program Effectiveness

For each of these goals, please rate the program's effectiveness in helping you reach it (n = 45):	*Not sure yet*		*Not effective*		*Somewhat effective*		*Very effective*		*Mean*	*SD*
Start a career as a language teacher	12	(28.6%)	1	(2.4%)	5	(11.9%)	24	(57.1%)	2.98	1.32
Enhance my effectiveness as a language educator	1	(2.2%)	1	(2.2%)	8	(17.4%)	36	(78.3%)	3.72	0.61
Connect with a community of fellow teachers	6	(13.0%)	6	(13.0%)	19	(41.3%)	15	(32.6%)	2.93	0.99
Improve job/career opportunities	8	(17.8%)	1	(2.2%)	17	(37.8%)	19	(42.2%)	3.04	1.07
Improve salary/earnings	9	(19.6%)	1	(2.2%)	16	(34.8%)	20	(43.5%)	3.02	1.11
Learn more about theory and research related to SLA	1	(2.2%)	0	(0.0%)	9	(19.6%)	36	(78.3%)	3.74	0.57
Move into or prepare for leadership positions	16	(35.6%)	0	(0.0%)	16	(35.6%)	13	(28.9%)	2.58	1.24
Prepare me to apply to a doctoral program	22	(50.0%)	3	(6.8%)	9	(20.5%)	10	(22.7%)	2.16	1.26
Prepare me to conduct research in my field	14	(32.6%)	2	(4.7%)	15	(34.9%)	12	(27.9%)	2.58	1.21
Fulfill a requirement for a position or certification	20	(46.5%)	0	(0.0%)	6	(14.0%)	17	(39.5%)	2.47	1.4
Complete coursework for another graduate program	29	(69.1%)	5	(11.9%)	3	(7.1%)	5	(11.9%)	1.62	1.05
Improve my standing with my peers locally	16	(36.4%)	2	(4.6%)	13	(29.6%)	13	(29.6%)	2.52	1.25
Improve my standing with my peers nationally	18	(40.0%)	2	(4.4%)	11	(24.4%)	14	(31.1%)	2.47	1.29

Interview data confirms survey findings, and overall it portrays an image of a program that has a strong, positive impact on alumni's practice. Interview quotes that are relevant to each goal will be discussed in turn.

Instructor effectiveness. Virtually every student interviewed agreed that taking part of the program made them a better language educator, with several students describing their experience as transformative. While the vast majority of students interviewed had previous teaching experience and pedagogical know-how, many of them agreed that the program augmented their knowledge, provided them with a much larger and nuanced set of teaching skills, and gave them a much broader perspective of their work in the context of the language teaching profession. Students often referred to the program as having the perfect balance of theory and practice: intensive theoretical readings and discussions followed by practice-focused assignment, which in turn directly (and often immediately) informed students' work in the classroom. Not surprisingly, this approach is intentionally built in by the faculty team. Student 14 described a change in the way they approached their work that perfectly summarizes what many other interviewees said:

> I changed so much over the past two and a half, three years. And like I said, incorporating a lot of the units and lessons and things that I created in my classes, that's essentially turned into the bulk of my curriculum has been like the things that I did in the program. And it changed the way I thought about how I organized my entire class. It changed my approach to goal setting with my students. I pretty much did a full overhaul and changed so many things. And it was overwhelming at the time doing it. But now, I feel like my class is what I really want it to be, you know, versus before I was like, this is just the textbook that we're using, or this is just what my department chair wants me to be doing. Now it's very much in line with my beliefs. My practice is in line with my beliefs. And that's directly because of the work I did in the program [Student #14].

Beyond this direct impact on teaching, many students reported a broadening of their perspective, an increase in their confidence as educators as they related to other stakeholders, and a sharpening of their purpose. Student 11, for example, was empowered to challenge and justify certain assessment methodologies based on insights gained during the program. Others acknowledged their newfound ability to advocate for foreign language education and engage in collaborative development with other professionals. This broader perspective, as reported by Student 10 for example, transformed their initially narrow focus into a more comprehensive understanding of the field, emphasizing the importance of research and professional networking. Two quotes exemplify these changes:

> [The program] made me feel more confident in my practice and my knowledge; it made me feel like I knew how to explain the why behind what I was doing. It made me feel like a more valid teacher. When I'm talking to students and parents especially, it made me feel like yeah, I really know what I'm doing and I have the credentials to back that up. So for me, it was definitely a confidence boost [Student #8].

> I think it also was helpful for me to see foreign language teaching as a field. I always just looked at my own classroom. And I was very much just focused on what I was doing in my own classroom, and maybe what my department was doing in my school, but I never thought about foreign language teaching as a whole field and how I could be a part of that field and how I could contribute to that field and participate more in the greater field. I never thought about those things before the program [Student #3].

SLA Theory and Research. If classroom practices are impacted, it is because of the intense focus on SLA theory and research that the faculty team built into the program. Not only do students become well versed in historical and contemporary SLA literature and its implications, they also come to understand that conducting research is within their reach and can be a tool for further personal development and community building. Several students reported becoming proficient users of research, but some of them developed the confidence to move past that and produce research of their own:

> It did not even occur to me that I could then take that research skill that I had, and apply that to my own practice as a teacher because I saw those as two different worlds like being a researcher and being a teacher, to me, just did not intertwine, and so the program has taught me that in order to be a good teacher I have to be constantly not only doing my own reflective practices… I'm excited about being able to go and continue to engage with research [Student #9].

> I wasn't really reading research before I joined the program. I was part of online communities like Facebook groups, and I was listening to podcasts, but I wasn't directly engaging in any research, or basing my practice on that. So, yes, it taught me so much about how to access those journals and those articles, how to even approach reading an article like a research article… Now I'm like the person in my department who's bringing articles to department meetings to share so that we can discuss [Student #14].

Career opportunities and Salary Increase. As a professionally oriented MA degree, the program naturally attracts individuals who are looking for additional education to advance their careers or improve their financial situation. The consensus from the interviews is that those who did want better career opportunities or salaries were able to achieve them, and in some cases opportunities came to those who weren’t looking for them. None of the students and alumni interviewed expressed disappointment or reported not finding their degree helpful in advancing their career or improve their earnings. Interview excerpts about this topic are much shorter and to the point:

> The impact for me is a diploma in United States. So that means that this is a ticket for me to be able to be interviewed by schools. So, for me, this is really good and very, very important for my lifelong teaching in United States [Student #3].

> I met my goal. And literally, I think when I was finishing the program, I already had the first interview set up [Student #7].

> Yes, I doubled my salary from transitioning from [being a] teacher to department chair [Student #4].

> I sort of felt like there was a bigger impact. I think [Student #1] also spoke about the relationship with different stakeholders, once you gain knowledge and you have this official knowledge added to your title. So it helps you speak with administrators, with parents, even when students, it gives you so much more legitimacy beyond the actual knowledge of what you're doing in the classroom, just how you're being perceived is a big difference. After three years, just upon graduation, I again, with direct connection to completing the MA, I was offered a different job, which I'm doing right now, which was

> in my eyes a promotion. So again, second time within a three year span, it had an enormous impact on me. I'm in a doctorate program right now, partly because of the confidence that I gained through being in a previous program like this. It's just mind blowing to me how much this MA has contributed to my path far beyond any expectation [Student #5].

Leadership. While leadership opportunities are also career advancement opportunities, and there is some overlap between the two categories, the latter tends to focus on changing jobs, job titles, or employer, while the former focuses on gaining access to opportunities that may not always entail a change in salary or job title, but bring about an increase in responsibility and often necessitate the use of a different skillset. Not all students were interested in leadership opportunities at the onset, but the clout (and skills) that comes with the degree can make them natural candidates in the eyes of supervisors and colleagues. Even students who have not yet been offered leadership positions expressed a change in the way they felt about them: whereas they would not have considered before, now they feel equipped for them and desire to move into them. Excerpts from interviews show that these opportunities often came as a surprise, but that alumni felt prepared to take them on because of what they had learned in the program:

> the program had enormous impact, even beyond my expectation on my career. In my first year in the program, I was appointed department chair. And I know that it had direct connection to that, I was specifically told that going back to school signals me as somebody who is looking to develop, to gain more professional knowledge, to grow. And that was something that was desirable [Student #4].

If I had the opportunity, I would love to be like a department chair or more of a leader among language teachers at my school, which was something that I had never really considered myself to be able to do before [Student #14].

There was a class about leadership. And I was just, you know, not really interested in that. And at the time I felt like, oh, this is good information, but not for me. And actually, while I was still in school, my department chair left and I was the next in line to be the department chair. And so pretty quickly I realized, okay, I actually did need to know all this information. And it was really beneficial [Student #11].

I also was not seeking out leadership positions; however, I was asked to be a part of a curriculum design team for sixth through 12th grade, and also an assessment design team. So although maybe, you know, not very recognizable leadership position, they were things that I was asked to do by the district, which kind of felt like leadership positions, because they were things that were going out to other language teachers in the district [Student #6].

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the evaluation results obtained from the survey, focus groups, interviews, and data analysis which were presented in Chapter Four. This evaluation used a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis to determine to what extent the program is aligned with online learning standards of quality and to measure the degree of satisfaction of current and past students with their experience in the program. The chapter briefly re-introduces of the purpose and significance of the evaluation, and it summarizes the literature review quality in online learning and student success as well as a brief description of the research design and methodology. Next, the implications of findings for each research question are discussed in depth, with a presentation of the program's major strengths as well as area for improvement. The chapter concludes with a list of recommendations for further improvement of the program.

Summary of Study Significance, Relevant Constructs, and Methodology

The program under evaluation is an M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching program at a large Midwest university. The program faces challenges despite its substantial size and financial contribution to the institution. The program director initiated an evaluation due to the perceived undervaluation and underfunding of the program, likely influenced by biases against online education in academia. The program also grapples with declining student enrollment despite proactive recruitment efforts. The evaluation aims to provide empirical data on the program's performance, guiding strategic planning for its future. This assessment is critical given the program's lack of formal evaluation, the changing landscape of online language education, and increasing competition from programs with lower tuition rates. Understanding the program's strengths and weaknesses is crucial for enhancing competitiveness and attracting prospective students. Based on feedback from the primary and secondary stakeholders (the program director and faculty team), the evaluation will focus on the program's alignment with online learning standards of quality as well as on students' and alumni's satisfaction with their experience in the program.

Quality in Online Learning

Defining quality in online education remains a challenge, with diverse perspectives among stakeholders shaping its understanding. Scholars and practitioners often interpret quality in online learning through different lenses depending on their favored perspective, and this lack of consensus is reflected in the partial overlap among existing frameworks. The three frameworks that inform this evaluation are briefly summarized here.

The Sloan-C Framework defines quality across five pillars: access, learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, and student satisfaction. These pillars serve as critical markers in evaluating online learning experiences at different levels, from individual courses to entire programs. A subsequent revision of the framework led to the creation of the OLC Scorecard, a practice-oriented tool designed to evaluate online learning across nine sets of criteria and four levels of accomplishment.

The quality of interaction within online learning environments, spanning student-content, student-teacher, and student-student interactions, holds significant importance in shaping student satisfaction and learning outcomes. Moore (1989) and Anderson (2003) emphasized the need for well-designed interactions, particularly highlighting the value of student-content interactions for fostering meaningful learning experiences. While different types of interaction contribute to the learning process, Bernard et al. (2009) underline the pivotal role of student-content interaction in deepening understanding and promoting critical thinking.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, rooted in constructivist principles, identifies social, teaching, and cognitive presence as essential elements for effective online learning. This model underscores the importance of collaborative and reflective learning environments, emphasizing the impact of presence on achieving meaningful learning outcomes. Research highlights a positive correlation between the three types of presence and learning achievements, showcasing their significance in fostering higher-order thinking and engagement within online learning communities.

Student Experience

For the purpose of this paper, the second inquiry area, student experience, is conceptualized as the sum of student satisfaction and student success, or the rate with which students who begin a course or program are able to complete it. Two frameworks stand out as helpful for framing the conversation around student experience: transactional distance and connectedness.

Transactional distance, conceptualized by Moore (1991), encompasses three variables: dialog, structure, and learner autonomy; these variables influence the distance learners perceive in online education. Transactional distance is significant in that it defines distance learning based on design features rather than physical distance. Studies utilizing this framework underscore the importance of sustained interaction and dialogue for reducing dropout rates.

Connectedness, an active involvement with others fostering comfort and well-being, plays a vital role in online learning environments. It promotes trust, cohesion, and a sense of belonging among students, aiding in emotional regulation and cognitive engagement. High levels of connectedness positively influence motivation, participation in knowledge-sharing, and ultimately, student satisfaction and persistence in online learning. Instruments like the Online Student Connectedness Survey (OSCS; Bolliger and Inan, 2012) have been developed to measure the extent of connectedness experienced by learners, encompassing aspects like community, comfort, facilitation, and interaction.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation set out to answer the following questions regarding the program:

Q1: How is the program aligned with online learning standards of quality?

1. Do faculty and students receive an appropriate level of support?
2. Are courses designed following recommended best practices?
3. Do students engage in substantive interaction with faculty and peers?

Q2: What is the level of satisfaction with the program for current and past students?

1. To what degree are students satisfied with their experience?
2. What components of the program are students and alumni least satisfied with?
3. Does participating in the program have an impact on alumni's professional practice?

The evaluation followed a program-oriented evaluation approach with participatory components. Steps in which stakeholder participation was most helpful for this project were in the setting of evaluative questions and the design of data collection procedures and instruments. Data collection and analysis followed a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data was collected via student and alumni surveys, while qualitative data was collected through student, alumni, and faculty interviews. Existing course content and design also constituted a form of data which was analyzed using the Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR). Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive techniques to search for trends in the data as well as to identify those elements of the program are performing well and those who are not. Qualitative data was analyzed utilizing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Rather than reiterating results for each research question and sub-question, this section will discuss the evaluation's major findings in terms of the program's most salient strengths and areas for improvement.

Program Strengths

Overall, the outcomes of this evaluation are strongly and consistently positive in a large majority of the areas investigated. Specifically, the following are areas of strength for the program: its faculty team, the quality of instruction, and the impact on students' professional career.

Faculty Team

The most salient strengths of the program derive from the strength of its faculty team. All of the positive findings of this evaluation can be traced back to the intentionality with which the faculty team was selected and operates on a daily basis. Students are enthusiastic about their interaction with faculty, who are perceived to be competent, available, personable, and supportive. Faculty are of high caliber and are not only experts in their areas of competence but also clearly demonstrate facility in the area of online learning. Students valued the connections they formed with faculty members, feeling encouraged to engage and seek guidance whenever needed.

Individual faculty strengths are amplified by the collaboration and collegiality enjoyed by the faculty team. Governance and curriculum responsibilities are shared meaningfully and regularly among the faculty team. There appears to be an open and dynamic working relationship, enjoyed by all, leading to significant productivity and consensus. Disagreements are present, but they do not detract from productivity or collegiality; rather, they are acknowledged as signs that faculty can be honest with one another and issues can be worked out effectively. This is a sign of a healthy program. As a result, faculty satisfaction appears to be very good, and likely above average for fully online programs.

Quality of Instruction

This evaluation found the program to be well aligned with online learning standards of quality. By and large, the courses reviewed were of very high quality, were clearly designed to maximize the affordances of online learning (as opposed to simply transposing F2F courses to the online modality), and demonstrated very high competence in online curriculum development and online teaching. Noteworthy in each of the courses are the significant amount of student-instructor and student-student interaction built in, and the authenticity and relevance of the assessment methods employed.

Students were extremely satisfied with the quality of the curriculum, both in terms of individual courses and for the program as a whole. Several interviewees noted that the program provided them with the right balance of theory and practice, stretching their knowledge, challenging preconceived notions or teaching myths they might have been holding on to, and providing them with actionable skills and knowledge to use in their professional contexts. The program's structure and organization were also regularly praised, and students expressed satisfaction with the logical progression of courses and their alignment with learning objectives.

Impact

Evaluation data makes it clear that the program is making a strong impact in students' professional lives. For each of the four top goals for students (enhancing their effectiveness as language educators; improving career opportunities; improving salary or earnings; and learning more about theory and research related to SLA), there is strong evidence that participating in the program can make a lasting difference.

Virtually every student interviewed agreed that taking part of the program made them a better language educator, with several students describing their experience as transformative. While the vast majority of students interviewed had previous teaching experience and pedagogical know-how, many of them agreed that the program augmented their knowledge, provided them with a much larger and more nuanced set of teaching skills, promoted a research-oriented mindset, and gave them a much broader perspective of their work in the context of the language teaching profession.

Results also show that those who did want better career opportunities or salaries were able to achieve them, and in some cases opportunities came to those who weren't looking for them. Not all students were interested in leadership opportunities at the onset, but the clout (and skills) that comes with the degree can make them natural candidates in the eyes of supervisors and colleagues, and several students reported an upwards shift in their leadership responsibilities.

Areas for improvement

Alongside these strengths, this program evaluation also identified a few areas where significant or pervasive issues are present. This section will summarize these issues, and recommendations for improvement will be discussed below. The areas that were identified as most problematic by this evaluation are advising and onboarding, peer relationships, timeliness of feedback, accessibility, and faculty support.

Advising and Onboarding

Data from the student survey shows a significant gap in a few areas related to advising and onboarding. A significant number of students surveyed did not have a chance to have a live conversation with a faculty member prior the start of the program to discuss program or onboarding expectations. Moreover, the processes of onboarding and orientation was often confusing from the student perspective, with students reporting being unsure what to do or describing the process as puzzling, messy, and unclear. While it is clear that onboarding issues are not a result of a lack of faculty effort, the reality is that onboarding procedures did not meet the needs of a significant number of students. For a few students, pre-program advising issues continued to affect them as they move along the program. As sustained advising issues may be related to attrition and/or lack of student success (Park & Choi, 2009), this is an area that raises significant concern.

The faculty team must have been aware of these orientation issues, because the onboarding procedure has been completely overhauled in the last few years. Currently, new students are expected to complete an onboarding process that has three major components: working through an online self-paced orientation module, attending an orientation virtual meeting, and participating in an initial advising meeting with the Program Director. Throughout the program, students can return to the orientation module and orientation meeting recoding and locate relevant sections. Having said that, the students that were most vocal about orientation issues were either recent graduates or current students, so it remains unclear whether these changes effectively solved the problem.

Peer Relationships

Another significant problematic area has to do with the extent to which students are able to develop relationships with their peers during the program. Although students report enjoying positive, supportive interactions with their peers, they also admitted to not being able to get to know their classmates well or find the connection or camaraderie they were hoping for. There's a clear sentiment among several students that the program lacked opportunities for meaningful connections among peers. Many felt that the structure of the program, while emphasizing collaboration and dialogue, didn't foster a strong sense of camaraderie or deeper relationships outside of course assignments. Some students acknowledged personal responsibility for not proactively engaging with peers, highlighting the difficulty in organically fostering connections in an online learning environment.

As a result of this lack of connectedness, students may lack a sense of belonging with other learners in the program and may lead to the feeling of working through the curriculum alone rather than alongside other like-minded individuals. Connectedness has a direct, positive effect on motivation, and specifically on students' desire to participate in the knowledge-sharing process (Ergün & Avcı, 2018). As one would expect, connectedness is also strongly related to student satisfaction and persistence in online learning (Hart, 2012; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Rovai, 2002).

Timeliness of feedback

While the issue of timeliness was reported by a smaller number of students, the impact of this issue is significant enough to warrant inclusion in this list. A small but significant number of students did not think the feedback from faculty was received in a timely manner during the program or that faculty always responded to their inquiries in a timely manner. Faculty #3, in particular, was reported as being more erratic with their feedback: responses didn't always come when needed, but when they did, they were sometimes too comprehensive to be actionable in the amount of time that was left to the student. The issue was consistent enough to prompt at least one student to expect the issue to continue, which in turn caused them to conceptualize specific courses as independent learning so that the experience would be framed in a helpful manner from the start.

Accessibility

Although the program's curriculum and approach to course design is nothing short of exemplary, one area that seems somewhat consistently problematic is accessibility. Reading materials and media from two of the courses were consistently inaccessible to individuals with disabilities, and a few accessibility issues were found in the third course as well. More precisely, a number of reading materials in at least two of the three courses reviewed were delivered as scanned PDF files, which are not accessible by screen readers and present a hard accessibility barrier to visually impaired individuals; likewise, video a number of lectures do not provide captions or transcripts, rendering them inaccessible to the deaf or hard of hearing.

Faculty Support

The quality of course design and instruction is even more impressive when one considers the faculty team has pulled it off largely on their own. There is little to no meaningful technical or development support that the team can take advantage of on a regular basis. When a faculty member receives support, this is usually provided by someone else on the teaching team. Faculty are expected to take care of course design, skill development, and troubleshooting largely on their own, and seek the expertise of one of their colleagues when in need of help.

It's worth noting that faculty agree that the support that the institution does provide is much too basic. Both the by-request technical support and the basic ID support now available does not match the needs of advanced online educators such as this program's faculty. Workshops abound, but faculty seem less interested in improving their already proficient teaching or technology skills. What is needed is the type of support that makes their life easier, either by taking some of their workload off their plates or improves their workflow. The program director has gone above and beyond to provide this type of support to the rest of the faculty so far, but expecting this effort to continue is unfair and unsustainable.

Recommendations for Practice

Results from this program evaluation identified a number of areas that are not performing as strongly as needed. What follows is a series of five recommendations for stakeholders to implement to address the issues described above.

Recommendation 1: Revise Onboarding Procedures

To address onboarding and advising issues, a thorough audit of existing practices and procedures is recommended. Issues reported by students seem to concentrate towards the beginning of their experience with the program, in the period between recruitment and the end of the first semester of studies, although as discussed above some of these issues continue to adversely affect students during the rest of the program. In particular, students report needing more help with planning out their program of study as well as an opportunity to discuss expectations and ask questions.

As mentioned above, onboarding procedures were recently overhauled, yet the students that were most vocal about orientation issues were either recent graduates or current students, so it remains unclear whether these changes effectively solved the problem. While the faculty team is already putting a lot of thoughtful effort towards advising and onboarding, the following suggestions may improve the student experience even further:

- One of the most potentially impactful recent changes is the requirement for all students to participate in a one-on-one initial meeting with the Program Director. To ease the director’s workload, these meetings could be distributed among the faculty team. At a minimum, the purpose of these meeting should include drafting a program of study, discussing online learning and program expectations, and give students a chance to ask questions.
- The Program Director acts as the primary advisor for all students in the program. This is a potential issue at times when the Director’s workload may prevent her from fulfill these duties in a timely manner. If onboarding meetings were to be distributed among the faculty team, this change could go a step further and distribute advisees among the faculty team for the duration of the program. This would lower response time,

improve the Director's workload, and give students a chance to develop a deeper relationship with one of the faculty members throughout the program. Given the number of students in the program, adding a small number of advisees to each faculty's workload would not render it unmanageable.

Recommendation 2: Integrate Group Projects

Lack of peer connectedness was lamented by a significant number of students, some of them unprompted. Interestingly, students who did experience deeper connections often attributed it to the mandatory group project in the Program Administration and Evaluation course. Unlike other opportunities for interaction, group projects require students to work together to produce an outcome used to evaluate all group participants. In other words, group participants are forced to work together and have to figure out a way to make the group interaction work. While group projects do not guarantee a more meaningful connection, for a number of participants they seemed to at least provide a realistic opportunity for it.

The ability to develop better group cohesion and sense of belonging may also be related to one of the program's primary goals, which is to participate in a community of practice during and after the program. If students feel isolated and alone during the program, they may not think of seeking out professional community outside of their immediate context once they graduate; conversely, if they develop a strong sense of belonging to the larger professional community during the program, they may feel motivated to invest energy in participating in these communities after the program is over.

Some of the students interviewed suggested implementing affinity or interest groups. These are groups of students linked by an interest, identity, or purpose; participation is voluntary and the scope and outcomes are entirely self-directed. While this suggestion may hold some potential, the sustainability of affinity groups may be too dependent on the entrepreneurship of a single, motivated student (or risk adding to the already heavy workload of faculty).

Additionally, all community building endeavors in the program need to acknowledge that one of the primary characteristics of its student body is the fact that students, in addition to their program requirements, are almost all working full time and may be juggling demanding family responsibilities as well. This is the same reason behind the lack of success of voluntary activities such as the Midweek Meetup: it would be nice to attend, but with limited time, these opportunities are often the first to be dismissed. For this reason, community building efforts need to be integrated into activities that overlap as much as possible with the students' primary goals for enrolling in the program: enhancing their effectiveness as language educators; improving career opportunities; improving salary or earnings; and learning more about theory and research related to SLA.

In other words, community building must be integrated in the program's core activities of teaching and learning. Group projects are a good candidate because, scheduling issues aside, they do not significantly alter the time requirements of the program on the students. Of course, for this to be true, these projects need to become an integral part of each course, which means revising current syllabi to replace individual assignment with group projects. Once these are fully integrated, though, faculty workload may actually improve, as the number of deliverables to grade would be lower.

Recommendation 3: Implement a Feedback Commitment

In order to improve students' experience with faculty feedback, all faculty should agree on and commit to a minimum standard of feedback quality in all courses. When determining such standard, the faculty team should discuss not only timeliness but also purpose and amount of feedback: in fact, students not only had issues with delayed feedback but also with the overwhelming, thorough nature of feedback when received.

Exemplary online faculty provide timely responses and feedback, focus on availability and presence, and make it a point to engage in periodic communication (Martin et al., 2019). While there isn't universal agreement on what constitutes timely feedback, responding within a 24-hour to 48-hour window seems common and reasonable. As for its nature, providing feedback that is goal-oriented, actionable, and user friendly will be most helpful in aiding students to reach their goals (Wiggins, 2012).

Recommendation 4: Conduct an Accessibility Review

Ensuring that online learning content is accessible makes sure that all learners, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities, can access and benefit from the learning experience. This includes people with disabilities such as visual impairments, hearing impairments, motor disabilities, and learning disorders. Accessible design often benefits all learners, not just those with disabilities; in addition, non-compliance with legal accessibility requirements can result in legal repercussions.

While this evaluation included a limited investigation of accessibility issues using OSCQR's accessibility checklist, a full accessibility audit is beyond the scope of this inquiry. The program should engage the services of an accessibility specialist, either through the college, the intstitution's CTL, or disabilities resource center to conduct a thorough accessibility audit of the program's curriculum. These audits go beyond simple checklist approaches and can provide insight on the accessibility of learning materials from the perspective of diverse learners.

While waiting for the result of an audit, faculty can and should address the two main accessibility issues discovered by this evaluation, which are the presence of inaccessible PDF files and the inconsistent availability of video captions. Suggestions for addressing each of those issues are below; however, it is recommended that faculty use Blackboard Ally to frame their own accessibility revisions. Blackboard Ally is a D2L/Brightspace integration that automatically scans course content for common accessibility issues and provides feedback to help instructors gauge the overall accessibility of a given course. Ally also provides step-by-step guidance on how to fix common accessibility issues. The institution provides this tool free of charges to all instructors.

To improve the readability of scanned or otherwise inaccessible PDFs, faculty should use Adobe Acrobat Pro (available on their university devices) to convert each file to selectable text; add tags to indicate heading structure; and add alternate text to images. Detailed instructions are available at https://kb.iu.edu/d/bfua.

Captions can be added to any video on the institution's media hosting service Kaltura. The system can add machine-generated captions with no length limit, as long as the captions are requested on each video page. Machine captions are generally about 70% to 80% accurate; however, this accuracy greatly improves for videos with higher recording clarity and careful enunciation. Captions can be manually edited once generated. Given that a large number of educational videos used in the program are already captioned, an acceptable alternative would be to ask students to use Google Chrome's Live Caption whenever they encounter a video that has not been previously captioned. An overview of this integrated functionality can be found at https://support.google.com/chrome/answer/10538231.

Recommendation 5: Investigate Avenues for ID Support

The last recommendation, which addresses the need for ongoing ID support, might require a longer term effort and a more significant financial investment from the college or university. While it is true that the current arrangements allow the faculty team to "make do" and even deliver excellent instruction virtually without any external support, faculty's workload would benefit from offloading some of the development and production work.

How to best structure a personnel addition? Hiring a dedicated ID for the program may be financially unsustainable, not to mention that the work needed may not be enough to fill one individual's plate. A better solution would be to contract the services of an ID who has been hired to serve multiple programs. Such individual would ideally be housed in the CTL, where they would benefit from the collaboration with other IDs and learning developers. It is important that one ID be assigned to the program on an ongoing fashion rather than this support be based on individual requests; this would allow faculty to develop an ongoing relationship with the ID, who would get to know the program in depth and better understand the needs, expectations, and requirements that are specific to the program and its target audience.

Conclusion

This evaluation used a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis to determine to what extent an M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching program at a large Midwest university is aligned with online learning standards of quality and to measure the degree of satisfaction of current and past students with their experience in the program.

Overall, the outcomes of this evaluation are strongly and consistently positive in a large majority of the areas investigated. Data from the survey, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis showed that the program is exemplary at aligning with online learning standards of quality, and can boast a high degree of satisfaction for current and past students. Specifically, the following are areas of strength for the program: its faculty team, the quality of instruction, and the impact on students' professional career. Alongside these strengths, this program evaluation also identified a few areas where significant or pervasive issues are present: advising and onboarding, peer relationships, timeliness of feedback, accessibility, and faculty support.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following recommendations are presented to the program's stakeholders: revise onboarding procedures; further integrate group projects into the existing curriculum; implement a feedback commitment; conduct an accessibility review; and investigate avenues for ID support at the institution. Even though the program is already performing at an exemplary level, implementing these recommendations will address the gaps identified by this evaluation and strengthen the program's position in the foreign language teaching field.

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Appendix 1: Student and Alumni Survey

Section 1: Student Support

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

- Before starting the program, I discussed my self-motivation and commitment to online learning with an advisor or faculty member.
- Before starting the program, I discussed my technology skills and program technology requirements with an advisor or faculty member.
- Before starting the program, I discussed program expectations (e.g., time commitment, academic rigor, etc.) with an advisor or faculty member.
- Before starting the program, I received information about admission requirements, advising, tuition, books, and fees.
- The new learner orientation helped me make the most out of online learning.
- Throughout the program I have had access to resources that help me access course materials from online databases, the library, etc.
- Throughout the program, faculty and/or support staff have been available to address my questions, problems, bug reporting, and complaints.
- Throughout the program, I have had access to effective academic advising.
- The program provides guidance and/or tutorials in the use of all technologies used for course delivery.
- When I needed help of any kind, I knew exactly how to ask for help.

Section 2: Learner Engagement

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

- Within each course, interaction with other students is encouraged.
- The way courses are designed and set up makes it easy to interact with other students.
- Interaction with faculty members is encouraged.
- Course design and requirements make it easy to interact with faculty.
- Faculty feedback on my assignments is constructive.
- Faculty feedback on my assignments is timely.
- The program provides opportunities to interact with other students outside of regular course activities.
- I have gotten to know some of the faculty members well.
- I have gotten to know some of my classmates well.
- I felt comfortable participating in course discussions and collaborative activities.
- I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.
- Participating in online discussions helped me appreciate different perspectives
- The way course topics were presented motivated me to explore them in depth
- Engaging in the program's learning activities was instrumental in deepening my perspective of the field
- Program faculty were helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that helped me clarify my thinking.
- Faculty helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.

- Faculty actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among programs participants.

Section 3: Experience

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about your experience:

- The program is well organized.
- Faculty are knowledgeable about the subject matter.
- It is easy to get in touch with faculty.
- Navigating course requirements is intuitive.
- Learning materials are relevant to my day-to-day professional experience.
- Course assignments are relevant to my day-to-day professional experience.
- I am regularly able to apply what I learned during the program into my practice.
- The number of students in each course section allows for meaningful engagement with the instructor.
- Faculty care about my learning journey.

Considering your entire experience with the program, how likely would you be to recommend it to a friend or colleague?

[Scale of 1 to 10]

Section 4: Impact

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your participation in the Program:

- Participating in the program positively impacted my ability to teach.
- Participating in the program positively impacted my self-confidence.

- Participating in the program positively impacted my professional standing at work.
- Participating in the program positively impacted my career prospects.
- Participating in the program positively impacted my financial situation.
- Participating in the program positively impacted my standing with my peers locally.
- Participating in the program positively impacted my standing with my peers nationally.

Section 5: Demographics

Please tell us a little bit more about yourself.

When did you enroll in the program?

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

When did you graduate from the program?

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

Currently attending

What is your age range?

20-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55 or older

What grades do you usually teach? Please select all that apply:

Pre-K

K-2

3-6

7-8

9-10

11-12

Postsecondary

I do not usually teach

Please select the job title that most closely describes your current employment:

Pre-Service Teacher

Classroom Teacher

Curriculum Specialist

Instructional Specialist

Learning Facilitator

Teacher Mentor

School Administrator

Grade Chair

Department Chair

District Administrator

What language(s) do you teach?

Latin

French

Spanish

German

Italian

Chinese (Mandarin)

Arabic

Japanese

Korean

Other:

What is your level of proficiency in this language?

Novice

Intermediate

Advanced

Superior

Distinguished/Native Speaker

I am not sure

Would you be interested in participating in a short interview to discuss your experience with the program in more detail?

Yes

No

Appendix 2: Focus Group and Interview Protocols

Student/Alumni Focus Group Protocol

Introduction Text

My name is Luca Giupponi and I will be the moderator for today's Program focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to hear your perspective on the quality of the program as a whole as well as your experience as current or former students in the program. After our discussion, the information we discussed will be categorized into themes and topics before being shared anonymously with the faculty team. They will then take that anonymous information and use it to help them improve their program and courses. Your personal information will not be connected to the results of this focus group.

You have already signed a consent form when you completed the student survey, and you agreed to participate to this focus group by entering your name and contact information in the field that asked for your willingness to participate in this focus group. If at any point you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you are free to leave at any time.

Before we begin, I would like to go over a few ground rules for the focus group. These are in place to ensure that all of you feel comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions.

Ground Rules:

1. Confidentiality – Please respect the confidentiality of your peers. The moderator will only be sharing the information anonymously with relevant faculty members.
2. One Speaker at a Time – Only one person should speak at a time in order to make sure that we can all hear what everyone is saying.
3. Use Respectful Language – In order to facilitate an open discussion, please avoid any statements or words that may be offensive to other members of the group.
4. Open Discussion – This is a time for everyone to feel free to express their opinions and viewpoints. You will not be asked to reach consensus on the topics discussed. There will be no right or wrong answers.
5. Your Perspective is Important – It is important that everyone's voice is shared and heard in order to make this the most productive focus group possible. I am looking for feedback that

can be used to improve the program, but it is also useful to hear about things that you were really happy with. Please speak up if you have something to add to the conversation!

Topic Domain 1: Student Satisfaction

I'd like to start by talking about your overall experience with the program. How has the experience been (so far)? What has gone well for you? What hasn't gone so well?

What made you decide to enroll in the program? When you look back at your motivation for joining the program, is the program giving you what you were looking for or helping you reach those goals?
Possible follow-up: Have your goals changed?

What do you think the instructors could do to improve?
What do you think the program as a whole could do to improve?
Possible follow-up topics:
Quality of faculty
Quality of advising
Course design
Relevance of learning materials/courses/assignments
Program organization

Topic Domain 2: Impact

Let's look at the impact of the program on your professional practice. If the program is having an impact, how would you describe it?
Possible follow-up topics:
Teaching: Would you consider yourself as using proficiency-oriented methodologies? Has the program played a role in your decision to use proficiency-oriented methods?
Using research: Has your confidence in your ability to incorporate or interpret research results changed? Would you say your teaching is more research-informed?

Reputation at work: how has your reputation changed at your school as a result of joining the program?
Leadership: How is participating in the program helping you become a leader at your school? Do you see yourself becoming a leader outside of your school as well? Perhaps within your district, or at the state/national level.
Career prospects: Do you feel like joining the program has improved your career prospects? Has the program helped you get a promotion or find a new job?
Salary/earnings: Do you feel like joining the program has improved your earning prospects?

Topic Domain 3: Faculty and Peer Engagement (informed by survey data)

Fewer respondents believed they had gotten to know classmates or faculty well. What was your experience in this regard?
Were you able to build a relationship with other students in the program? Was that important to you?
Survey data shows that participants rarely took advantage of available interaction opportunities. Why do you think that is?
Was there an issue with timeliness of feedback?

Director Interview Protocol

Topic Domain 1: Faculty Support

How do you ensure faculty are supported inside the program? What is the program doing well? What could it do better?
Do you have the resources you need to ensure faculty are supported in their work?
Do you believe in the mission of the program? Do you feel the program is doing all it can to fulfill that mission?
Do you and the faculty receive professional development, assistance, and support for online course development and teaching?

Topic Domain 2: Course Design

Does the program provide any guidelines for faculty to follow regarding minimum requirements for course development, design, and delivery of online instruction?

Do you follow a course development process that ensures courses are aligned with learning outcomes at the course and program level?

Would you say there is consistency in course development across the program?

Is curriculum development a core responsibility for faculty?

How does the technology you use actively support the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content?

How do you minimize superfluous use of technology?

Are learning materials, course syllabi, and course assignments reviewed periodically to ensure they meet online course and program learning outcomes?

Is there a regular revision process for the program and course learning outcomes?

Do you distribute course evaluations to collect feedback on the effectiveness of instruction? How is feedback taken into account in your course revision process? How about faculty performance evaluations?

Topic Domain 3: Learner Engagement

What are your goals for your students, and how well do you believe the program is meeting them?

Do you believe student-to-student and faculty-to-student interaction are essential characteristics of online learning? Are they encouraged and facilitated in the program? If so, how?

Do you feel students are building strong relationships with each other during the program?

Does the program provide students a way to interact with other students in an online community outside the course?

Faculty Interview Protocol

Topic Domain 1: Faculty Support

How are you feeling supported inside the program? What is the program doing well? What could it do better?

Do you believe in the mission of the program? Do you feel the program is doing all it can to fulfill that mission?

Do you receive professional development, assistance, and support for online course development and teaching?

If you need help with ______, do you know where to find it?

Technical/technology issues

Course design

Selecting and using new/emerging technologies

Advising and student support questions

Does the program provide you with clear expectations regarding student engagement (e.g. response time, contact information, etc.)?

Topic Domain 2: Course Design

In general, how do you ensure quality in your courses?

Are your course assignments relevant to your students? How do you know?

Do you follow a course development process that ensures courses are aligned with learning outcomes at the course and program level?

How does the technology you use actively support the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content?

How do you minimize superfluous use of technology?

Topic Domain 3: Learner Engagement

Do you believe student-to-student and faculty-to-student interaction are essential characteristics of online learning? Are they encouraged and facilitated in your courses? If so, how?

Do you feel students are building strong relationships with each other during the program?

Appendix 3: Course Analysis Rubrics

Assessment in FLT

			Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision	Moderate Revision	Major Revision	Not Applicable	Comments
1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION								
1	1	Course includes Welcome and Getting Started content.	X					
	2	Course provides an overall orientation or overview, as well as module-level overviews to make course content, activities, assignments, due dates, interactions, and assessments, predictable and easy to navigate/find.	X					
	3	Course includes a course information area and syllabus that make course expectations clear and findable.	X					
	4	A printable syllabus is available to learners (PDF, HTML).		X				This is a D2L issue, but downloading and printing the syllabus is much harder than it should be.
	5	Course includes links to relevant campus policies on plagiarism, computer use, filing grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.	X					Included in Syllabus
	6	Course provides access to online learner success resources (technical help, support services, orientation, academic honesty, tutoring).					X	Only some of those are available, but are not specific to online learning
	7	Course information states whether the course is fully online, blended, or web-enhanced.					X	Not necessary given it's an online program

	8	Course provides appropriate guidelines for successful participation regarding technical requirements (e.g., browser version, mobile, publisher resources, secure content, pop-ups, browser issues, microphone, webcam).					X	There is some of this but again, this is done at the program level
	9	Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to learning activities and assessments.	X					
	10	Course provides contact information for instructor, department, and program.		X				Only instructor info is present
2. COURSE TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS								
2	11	Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources.	X					
	12	Technical skills required for participation in course learning activities scaffold in a timely manner (orientation, practice, and application - where appropriate).		X				I did not find an overview/orientation to PlayPosit
	13	Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu.		X				Superfluous items should be removed
	14	Course includes links to privacy policies for technology tools.			X			Not provided
	15	Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.	X					
3. DESIGN AND LAYOUT								
3	16	A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles).	X					
	17	Large blocks of information are divided into manageable sections with ample white space around and between the blocks.	X					
	18	There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.	X					
	19	Instructions are provided and well written.	X					

	20	Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	X					
	21	Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document.	X					
	22	Flashing and blinking text are avoided.	X					
	23	A sans-serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used.	X					
	24	When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table.	X					
	25	Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.	X					
	26	Table header rows and columns are assigned.	X					
	27	Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles.	X					
	28	For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides.	X					
4. CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES								
4	29	Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources to present content, support learning and collaboration, and facilitate regular and substantive interaction with the instructor.	X					
	30	Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.	X					
	31	Course provides activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities.	X					
	32	Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low cost materials are used.	X					
	33	Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable.					X	
	34	Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive	X					

		technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image.					
	35	A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided (“alt” tags, captions, transcripts, etc.), and audio description is provided for video-only content.	X				Lectures are captioned, but Module 0 intro videos are not.
	36	Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be used as a primary method for delivering information.	X				
	37	Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here").	X				

5. INTERACTION							
5	38	Regular and substantive instructor-to-student expectations, and predictable/scheduled interactions and feedback. are present, appropriate for the course length and structure, and are easy to find.	X				
	39	Expectations for all course interactions (instructor to student, student to student, student to instructor) are clearly stated and modeled in all course interaction/communication channels.	X				
	40	Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor.	X				
	41	Course provides activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, promote regular and substantive interaction, and establish trust (e.g., ice-breaking activities, Course Bulletin Board, planned Office Hours, and dedicated discussion forums).	X				
	42	Course offers opportunities for learner to learner interaction and constructive collaboration.	X				
	43	Course provides learners with opportunities in course interactions to share resources and inject knowledge from diverse sources of information with guidance and/or standards from the instructor.	X				

6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK								
6	44	Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the Course Information/ Syllabus materials.	X					
	45	Course includes frequent, appropriate, and authentic methods to assess the learners' mastery of content.	X					
	46	Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).	X					
	47	Course provides opportunities for learners to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (via pre-tests, self-tests with feedback, reflective assignments, peer assessment, etc.).	X					
	48	Learners are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation.					X	
	49	Learners have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook.	X					
	50	Course includes the opportunity for learners to provide descriptive feedback on their experience in the online course, the course design, content, user experience, and technology.	X					

Program Development and Administration

			Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision	Moderate Revision	Major Revision	Not Applicable	Comments
		Estimated time needed for revision:		1/2 hour or less	1/2-2 hours	2+ hours		
1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION								
1	1	Course includes Welcome and Getting Started content.	X					
	2	Course provides an overall orientation or overview, as well as module-level overviews to make course content, activities, assignments, due dates, interactions, and assessments, predictable and easy to navigate/find.	X					
	3	Course includes a course information area and syllabus that make course expectations clear and findable.	X					
	4	A printable syllabus is available to learners (PDF, HTML).	X					
	5	Course includes links to relevant campus policies on plagiarism, computer use, filing grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.	X					
	6	Course provides access to online learner success resources (technical help, support services, orientation, academic honesty, tutoring).	X					Only some of those are available, but are not specific to online learning
	7	Course information states whether the course is fully online, blended, or web-enhanced.					X	Not necessary given it's an online program
	8	Course provides appropriate guidelines for successful participation regarding technical requirements (e.g., browser version, mobile, publisher resources, secure content, pop-ups, browser issues, microphone, webcam).					X	There is some of this but again, this is done at the program level
	9	Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to learning activities and assessments.	X					
	10	Course provides contact information for instructor, department, and program.	X					

2. COURSE TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS								
	11	Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources.	X					
2	12	Technical skills required for participation in course learning activities scaffold in a timely manner (orientation, practice, and application - where appropriate).	X					
	13	Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu.	X					
	14	Course includes links to privacy policies for technology tools.		X				
	15	Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.	X					

3. DESIGN AND LAYOUT								
	16	A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles).	X					
	17	Large blocks of information are divided into manageable sections with ample white space around and between the blocks.	X					
	18	There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.	X					
	19	Instructions are provided and well written.	X					
3	20	Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	X					
	21	Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document.	X					
	22	Flashing and blinking text are avoided.	X					
	23	A sans-serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used.	X					
	24	When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table.	X					
	25	Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.					X	
	26	Table header rows and columns are assigned.					X	

	27	Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles.	X					
	28	For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides.	X					

4. CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES

4	29	Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources to present content, support learning and collaboration, and facilitate regular and substantive interaction with the instructor.	X					
	30	Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.	X					
	31	Course provides activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities.	X					
	32	Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low cost materials are used.	X					
	33	Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable.		X				
	34	Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image.				X		Scanned PDFs are not accessible
	35	A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided (“alt” tags, captions, transcripts, etc.), and audio description is provided for video-only content.				X		Video lectures do not provide captions or transcripts
	36	Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be used as a primary method for delivering information.	X					
	37	Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here").	X					

5. INTERACTION

5	38	Regular and substantive instructor-to-student expectations, and predictable/scheduled interactions and feedback. are present, appropriate for the course length and structure, and are easy to find.	X					

	39	Expectations for all course interactions (instructor to student, student to student, student to instructor) are clearly stated and modeled in all course interaction/communication channels.	X					
	40	Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor.	X					
	41	Course provides activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, promote regular and substantive interaction, and establish trust (e.g., ice-breaking activities, Course Bulletin Board, planned Office Hours, and dedicated discussion forums).		X				There aren't many spaces or activities outside of instructional tasks that promote interaction, outside of teams channels. Instructor may want to consider expanding here - then again the students are doing a lot of group project work in the course and this may not be necessary.
	42	Course offers opportunities for learner to learner interaction and constructive collaboration.	X					
	43	Course provides learners with opportunities in course interactions to share resources and inject knowledge from diverse sources of information with guidance and/or standards from the instructor.	X					

6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

	44	Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the Course Information/ Syllabus materials.	X					
6	45	Course includes frequent, appropriate, and authentic methods to assess the learners' mastery of content.	X					
	46	Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).	X					

47	Course provides opportunities for learners to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (via pre-tests, self-tests with feedback, reflective assignments, peer assessment, etc.).	X					
48	Learners are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation.					X	
49	Learners have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook.	X					
50	Course includes the opportunity for learners to provide descriptive feedback on their experience in the online course, the course design, content, user experience, and technology.	X					

Sociolinguistics and Spoken Language

		Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision	Moderate Revision	Major Revision	Not Applicable	Comments
	Estimated time needed for revision:		1/2 hour or less	1/2-2 hours	2+ hours		
1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION							
1 1	Course includes Welcome and Getting Started content.	X					
2	Course provides an overall orientation or overview, as well as module-level overviews to make course content, activities, assignments, due dates, interactions, and assessments, predictable and easy to navigate/find.	X					

	3	Course includes a course information area and syllabus that make course expectations clear and findable.	X					
	4	A printable syllabus is available to learners (PDF, HTML).	X					
	5	Course includes links to relevant campus policies on plagiarism, computer use, filing grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.	X					
	6	Course provides access to online learner success resources (technical help, support services, orientation, academic honesty, tutoring).	X					Only some of those are available, but are not specific to online learning
	7	Course information states whether the course is fully online, blended, or web-enhanced.					X	Not necessary given it's an online program
	8	Course provides appropriate guidelines for successful participation regarding technical requirements (e.g., browser version, mobile, publisher resources, secure content, pop-ups, browser issues, microphone, webcam).					X	There is some of this but again, this is done at the program level
	9	Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to learning activities and assessments.	X					
	10	Course provides contact information for instructor, department, and program.	X					

2. COURSE TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS								
2	11	Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources.	X					
	12	Technical skills required for participation in course learning activities scaffold in a timely manner (orientation, practice, and application - where appropriate).	X					
	13	Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu.	X					
	14	Course includes links to privacy policies for technology tools.		X				These are not available
	15	Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.	X					

3. DESIGN AND LAYOUT

3	16	A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles).	X					
	17	Large blocks of information are divided into manageable sections with ample white space around and between the blocks.	X					
	18	There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.	X					
	19	Instructions are provided and well written.	X					
	20	Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	X					
	21	Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document.	X					
	22	Flashing and blinking text are avoided.	X					
	23	A sans-serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used.	X					
	24	When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table.	X					
	25	Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.	X					
	26	Table header rows and columns are assigned.	X					
	27	Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles.	X					
	28	For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides.	X					

4. CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES								
4	29	Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources to present content, support learning and collaboration, and facilitate regular and substantive interaction with the instructor.	X					
	30	Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.	X					
	31	Course provides activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities.	X					

	32	Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low cost materials are used.	X					All readings besides the textbook are free through the library
	33	Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable.					X	
	34	Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image.				X		Scanned PDFs are not accessible
	35	A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided (“alt” tags, captions, transcripts, etc.), and audio description is provided for video-only content.				X		Lectures and videos should be captioned
	36	Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be used as a primary method for delivering information.	X					
	37	Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here").	X					
5. INTERACTION								
5	38	Regular and substantive instructor-to-student expectations, and predictable/scheduled interactions and feedback. are present, appropriate for the course length and structure, and are easy to find.	X					
	39	Expectations for all course interactions (instructor to student, student to student, student to instructor) are clearly stated and modeled in all course interaction/communication channels.	X					
	40	Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor.	X					
	41	Course provides activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, promote regular and substantive interaction, and establish trust (e.g., ice-breaking activities, Course Bulletin Board, planned Office Hours, and dedicated discussion forums).					X	
	42	Course offers opportunities for learner to learner interaction and constructive collaboration.	X					

	43	Course provides learners with opportunities in course interactions to share resources and inject knowledge from diverse sources of information with guidance and/or standards from the instructor.	X					
6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK								
6	44	Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the Course Information/ Syllabus materials.	X					
	45	Course includes frequent, appropriate, and authentic methods to assess the learners' mastery of content.	X					
	46	Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).	X					
	47	Course provides opportunities for learners to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (via pre-tests, self-tests with feedback, reflective assignments, peer assessment, etc.).			X			This aspect seems to be lacking in the course, or at least it is not immediately explicit upon review
	48	Learners are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation.					X	
	49	Learners have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook.	X					
	50	Course includes the opportunity for learners to provide descriptive feedback on their experience in the online course, the course design, content, user experience, and technology.	X					

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education in Instructional Systems Technology, Indiana University 2024

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics/TESL, Iowa State University 2013

- Specialization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Bachelor of Music Performance, *summa cum laude*, Arizona State University 2011