

Evaluation Report for Program Review Face to Face Meeting University of Wisconsin-Whitewater: Japanese Studies (BA), 2025- 2026

Date: March 13, 2026

In Attendance: Interim Provost Robin Fox; Dean Jason Janke (L&S); World Languages and Cultures Department Chair Pilar Melero; Past Program Coordinator Jonathan Burkham; faculty and staff in the Japanese Studies program; Program Review Team Chair Veronica Soria-Martinez; Program Review team members Corey Davis, Shoji Nakayama, Lisa Huempfer (College Expert); Assessment Representative Katy Casey

Overview of review team evaluation, program comments:

The Review Team noted the effort the program has been making in creating a program that encompasses literature and culture with language acquisition; enrollment has also been good. There has been a turnover in leadership, with a change in the coordinator, bringing in a full-time language instructor, whose hard work has also been noted by the Review Team. Michelle Damian started as a full-time faculty in Japanese language acquisition and then moved on to the coordinator position, which is a course release from the language courses. Japanese is a very interdisciplinary program, with faculty across many different departments and areas. Jonathan and Michelle teach the language courses in the World Languages department, then there is a graduate student from Japan who assists with the Japanese table (Stammtisch style) every semester, which is a fellowship (funded through a donation). There are around 15 students studying abroad in Japan. Pilar is the chair of the World Languages department, and Michelle, from the History department, is the students' advisor. There are two exchange programs. Studying in Japan is not a requirement for the program, but students are very interested in going. Students place there even higher than they do here in their language courses.

Discussion of Review Team's evaluation:

1 – In thinking about the program's direction over the next few years, what areas seem most promising for continued investment or innovation?

For continued investment, staffing is stable and there is no additional need for instructional support, unless the graduate student fellow funding was no longer available, or the enrollment increased significantly. However, the main language instructor has noted the significant time and mental investment required to be the sole language instructor and has asked to be released of one of the 101 language sections. Other, more advanced classes were offered instead, but after exploring the different possibilities available, she decided to stay with her current assignments. Her classes are full to the maximum in the department. All beginning and intermediate classes have a cap of 30 students per class. Some of her classes are at 34. The fellow does provide language support in the classroom. All the fellows

who have visited so far are selected among the best by their universities and they are amazingly hard-working in the program.

2 – How are outreach efforts to alumni and external partners progressing?

There is a connection with Kikkoman. This summer there was a community event with them, but there are no longer talks about fundraising with this organization. Additional funding will be necessary to maintain the graduate fellows' program, which is critical to the program's success. There has been a proposal to get a more formalized plan to cover part of the cost of this fellowship spearheaded by Michelle and Melanie with Kikkoman. In terms of the advisory council involvement, they do support the program's assessment process. The coordinator meets with the advisory council board and after they review the portfolios, the coordinator writes and gives grades and feedback for students. There are no external members on the advisory council, only UW-W professors.

3 – The review team observed that the current SLOs may not fully reflect the range of skills developed through Japanese language study. How might the program consider refining its outcomes or assessment tools to better capture language acquisition?

The program members currently feel very good about the outcomes of the program, our students are placing even higher than we expected in the language proficiency placements, and the second block, which is intercultural Japanese understanding has been successful as well. When Jonathan took over, there were many more SLOs and they were confusing, but now they have been consolidated and viewed by the program to be clearer and more accessible.

The review team found the current SLOs focus more on methodology or what the students are being asked to do (complete a portfolio), but do not indicate the core competencies valued by the program. Additionally, it is not clear how students advance from one proficiency level to the next. While SLOs do not need to be an exhaustive list of all competencies, they should cover the core knowledge and skills expected of program graduates.

The assessment work is appropriately distributed between the coordinator, the advisory board, and the instructors. Discussion ensued regarding portfolio designs that have worked for other programs. For example, it was suggested that the artifacts in the portfolio are signature assignments from required classes, and these artifacts will have already been evaluated. Therefore, the portfolio reviewers could focus on students' ability to reflect on how the selected artifacts represent the key competencies expected of them having completed the program.

The provost noted how appreciative the students who graduated are for their experiences throughout the program. Also noted was Melanie's contributions to the program, and her recent teaching award in which all her students showed up to recognize her.

Recommended Actions:

Recommended Action #1

Work with alumni relations to more systematically track graduates. Identify alumni and potential partners who could be part of a future advisory board and convene at least one meeting with an external advisory group.

Recommended Action #2

Refine the two SLOs to more clearly identify the discrete skills they address. Consider adding an additional SLO or sub-outcomes to capture these skills. Provide a clearer explanation of how assessment results are used to guide curricular revisions.

Recommended Action #3

Revise and update the 4-year plan (for the major), so students have a clear suggested sequence for when in their college careers they should take required and elective courses in Japanese Studies. Consider doing the same for the minor.

Recommended Result:

Continuation with minor concerns.

Next Self-Study and/or Progress Report Due Dates:

1 - Next FULL self-study will be due to the Dean on May 1, 2032, and to the Assessment Office on August 1, 2032

For a copy of the full evaluation report and detailed comments, please reach out to the assessment office: assessment@uww.edu.