

## Annual Report Form

Please answer the following questions in the body of an e-mail and return to [r culbert@iusb.edu](mailto:r culbert@iusb.edu). CC a copy of the report to your department faculty and to your dean.

a. Program Name - English Master's Degree

b. Report prepared by – Margaret Scanlan

c. Who is the current assessment contact for your program? After June 1, please use Elaine Roth, Chair, English. (Scanlan has been Director of Graduate Studies for two years, but officially retires May 31.) A new director will be appointed beginning August 15.

d. Should assessment information be sent to anyone else in your department? No.

1. What are the program's educational goals? (Please take goals directly from your program's assessment plan, and highlight any changes made this year.)

The M.A. in English is a 36-credit hour program offering training in the production, analysis, and teaching of literary texts. A successful student should be able to write a research paper that 1) defines an area of inquiry within an appropriate larger context (e.g., a course, a discipline) 2) exhibits graduate-level research skills 3) is written from a coherent theoretical position 4) demonstrates an awareness of the current state of scholarship and major issues in the field 5) demonstrates an ability to work with complex ideas 6) demonstrates originality and independence and 7) uses advanced disciplinary knowledge and terminology.

In creative writing workshops, students are expected to produce work that demonstrates substantial originality and awareness of its place in a tradition. Students are expected to understand and apply knowledge of the craft of writing, which may include formal matters, such as understanding the conventions of the sonnet, as well as stylistic issues such as producing lively dialogue or developing a distinctive narrative voice.

All students are expected to write fluently and correctly in an appropriate academic register. They are also expected to be able to present their ideas orally, both in seminar discussions and reports. The program encourages students to seek a wider professional audience for their work, e.g., by presenting papers at graduate conferences, publishing original work on the web, doing public readings of creative work, doing editorial work on a journal or literary magazine.

2. What assessment techniques did the program use? (Please take assessment techniques directly from your program's assessment plan and highlight any changes made this year.)

The department conducted its first full-scale English M.A. Portfolio Assessment using the attached reader's form, which uses criteria from the English M.A. Assessment Plan. The department maintains a portfolio for each graduate student that consists of papers from the three core courses and one elective. Each faculty member on the Graduate Committee (consisting this past year of nine faculty members: Rebecca Brittenham, Karen Gindele, Lee Kahan, Jake Mattox, Robert Meyer-Lee, Kelcey Parker, Elaine Roth, Margaret Scanlan, and Ken Smith) read 6-10 graduate papers; i.e., all of the papers on file were read by at least one faculty member. The committee met to discuss its findings. On the whole, faculty are

satisfied with student progress, with virtually all students rated as either “excellent” or “satisfactory” on each of the criteria.

The committee decided to add two or three categories to the reader’s form that refer directly to higher-level writing skills, such as the development of a distinctive and effective voice.

The committee identified literary theory as an area of concern. All of our own B.A. students take an introductory course in literary theory, a subject that people who enter the program from other disciplines or other institutions have not always encountered. The committee plans to discuss the introductory course, L501, Professional Scholarship in Literature, in Fall 2009 with a view to seeing whether its emphasis should shift away from research into theory. L501 will next be offered in Spring 2010.

The committee has begun to discuss moving the portfolio from a paper format to an electronic one. We hope that Oncourse can be used for this purpose in the near future. Doing so would eliminate some routine drudgery and make access to all of our graduate papers available to all of us.

In addition to reading portfolios, the department asked each faculty member who taught a graduate class in English to fill out a “Progress Report Checklist” for each student. The progress report is designed to help us monitor features of a student’s performance, such as the ability to deliver oral reports or participate helpfully in seminar discussions, which are not apparent from an examination of papers. Instructors are also invited to identify students who do not seem to be making progress in the program and identify issues that may interfere with success, such as consistent inability to meet deadlines or apparent lack of preparation for discussions. This information is intended to be used for advising purposes.

Last year, the department conducted a survey of all current graduate students. We intend to offer this survey every three years; we also plan to conduct an alumni survey in 2011. An external review of the English Department is scheduled for 2010.

3. What has your program done with assessment information this year? (i.e. communicated results to faculty, staff, alumni and students, made changes in the curriculum, made changes in the budget, added new courses. . .)

Spring 2009 saw the first offering of G660, Stylistics, a course added after previous assessment discussions. This year’s assessment discussion, as we have seen, led to a plan to reexamine the curriculum for our introductory course. In response to last year’s survey, we explicitly assigned an academic advisor to every graduate student; the program is now large enough that the graduate director cannot be the sole advisor for all students, as was the case in the first years. A new graduate *Handbook* distributed in September brought together campus and program policies, another significant step for advisors and students.

4. After reflecting on assessment activities in your unit, as a result of assessment what are two issues you would like to address?

1) We need to develop a more visible web presence for the program; one of our graduate students has been helping us with the English Department web pages. While we currently post assessment reports to the shared department H:\ drive, it would be better to have them on our own web page.

**2) One of last year's graduates won a full-ride Presidential Fellowship to continue in a doctoral program in American Studies at Purdue. We need a way to acknowledge and even publicize such successes.**