

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT PLAN

December 2005

I. Educational Goals for Majors

Students completing the English major in literature or creative writing must demonstrate in reading

1. the ability to analyze and interpret literary texts
2. the ability to apply literary and rhetorical theories to reading and writing
3. a sense of social and literary history as context
4. a knowledge of the concept of genre

in writing

1. the general skills of college-level exposition
2. skills associated specifically with analysis and interpretation of literary texts
3. for majors with a concentration in writing, the skills associated with creative writing, exposition, and/or journalism

II. Methodology for Measuring the Attainment of Educational Goals

1. Direct measure: the portfolio

The portfolio consists of ten analytical and creative papers, the final one to be a reflective essay on the portfolio itself, that the student has written for each course in the major from the sophomore to senior years. Each advisor evaluates papers for their success in meeting the seven reading and writing goals according to the three-point scale of strong, competent, or weak.

2. Indirect measures:

A. A student survey administered to two upper-level classes that asks the following questions:

1. What do you see as the strengths of the English major program?
2. How would you like to see the program develop (course offerings, teaching methods, departmental community, opportunities for creative work beyond courses and student publications, advising, anything else)?
3. Do you feel that you have been able to demonstrate your skill and knowledge? In what formats or mediums do you feel you are best able to demonstrate what you can do (writing, discussion, exams, other)?
4. Do you have an awareness of the concerns of 1) historical periods in American and British literature and 2) literary genres? Do you have suggestions for how to provide this knowledge better?
5. In what ways have you developed the ability to apply literary and rhetorical theories to reading and writing?
6. What strengths in particular have you developed in interpreting literature and in writing about it? Do you have suggestions for how to teach these skills better?

7. If you have taken film studies courses, what strengths have you developed in analyzing and writing about films and in screenwriting? How would you like to see this part of the program develop?

8. What strengths have you developed in creative writing (poetry, fiction, drama, nonfiction)? How would you like to see the creative writing program develop?

B. External review every five years

III. Process for using assessment information to improve the program:

Once a year, advisors assess and report on their students' portfolio papers to the Chair of the Committee on the Major, who in turn tabulates and presents the collective information to the rest of the committee and to the department. The committee discusses and makes recommendations concerning the curriculum, advising, and other aspects of assessment, as does the department. There is a scheduled annual meeting of all faculty in the major to discuss data and recommendations for the program with several additional discussions in monthly department meetings as issues arise; there are meetings once a semester of advisors with students concerning their programs and their work collected in the portfolio. The most substantial recent changes made to the curriculum have been to construct more specific writing assignments to develop students' knowledge in the goals listed for reading.

IV. Participation of constituencies

The Chair of the Committee on the Major reports to the department on the committee's deliberations and recommendations and invites discussion. The committee and department evaluate and respond to the issues raised by students in the surveys. There is not as yet a mechanism for reporting to students on our discussions.

V. Record Keeping

The Chair of the Committee on the Major collects and tabulates the advisors' assessment of portfolios and the results of the student surveys, each advisor also keeping a copy of the reports of his or her advisees' portfolios in his or her office. The chair keeps a summary record of the reports and the original student surveys and writes the assessment reports.