

Assessment Report: Department of English and Modern Languages

Submitted by: Paul Dahlgren, chair, Assessment Committee

October 26th, 2011

Part One: Summary and Analysis of Assessment Results

A. Summary of Findings

Last year 15 students graduated from the various BA tracts offered by the Department of English and Modern Languages. Four students graduated from the Professional Writing Track, eight students from the literature track and three students graduated from the English with Teaching Certification track.

Our primary tool for program assessment involves faculty evaluation of the capstone projects developed in ENGL 4965, a course offered in the fall of each year. Eight students completed that course in fall 2010. We complement our assessment of that material with scores from the Major Field Test in English which focuses on student knowledge of literature in different time periods as well as with results from the GACE exam (taken by students who wish to receive teacher certification) as needed.

In 2010-11, the English department elected to focus our attention on PLO #1 and PLO #2 detailed below. All PLOs were revised this year, but these PLOs were not revised in a significant manner. Rubrics have been developed by faculty to measure each outcome and the assessment committee established a 75% Met rate as acceptable for most outcomes.

Program Learning Outcomes	Outcome Measures	Number Assessed	% Did Not Meet	% Met	% Exceeded
PLO #1 Compose effective responses to the rhetorical situations of writing tasks	Purpose	9	56%	33%	11%
	Audience	9	33%	45%	22%
	Rhetorical Strategies	9	45%	33%	22%
	Language	9	22%	67%	11%
PLO #2 Compose effective responses to the rhetorical situations of speaking tasks	Rhetorical Effectiveness	9	11%	78%	11%
	Effectiveness of	9	22%	56%	22%

	Performance				
	Effectiveness of Peripherals	9	22%	78%	0%
	Overall Effectiveness	9	22%	67%	11%

GACE Results 2010

Summary Finding: 100% Pass

English Test II (Writing)	Average Percent Institution	Average Percent Statewide
Subarea 1: Writing Conventions and Process	61	79
Understands the conventions of Standard American English	58	69
Understands writing as a process	58	81
Understands the use of research and technology in writing	67	86
Subarea 2: Writing for Various Purposes	81	86
Understands techniques for developing organized, focused, narrative writing	100	89
Understands techniques for developing organized, focused, technical or expository writing	79	87
Understands techniques for developing organized, focused, persuasive writing	60	76
Understands techniques for developing organized, focused writing for the analysis of literary and informational texts	83	89
Subarea 3: Oral and Visual Communications	92	82
Understands principles and techniques for preparing and delivering oral communication.	92	83

Analysis of Findings

Although we might have preferred somewhat stronger results, the findings for PLO #2 were deemed acceptable. Of more concern is PLO #1. Our findings suggest significant weakness in our student's ability to write with a clear purpose and some weakness in using the appropriate rhetoric for a given

audience. Furthermore, despite a 100% pass rate on the GACE, our program shows continual weakness in one category in Subarea 1, understand writing as a process. To be clear, our analysis only marginally focuses on our student's ability to analyze specific material, but focuses instead on whether students can write an appropriate manner for the audiences their papers address. This lack of purpose and weakness in addressing an audience suggests several possible things including a lack of investment by students in their own work, poor articulation among the faculty of what the purpose of various assignments should be, the need for more rhetorical training in various courses and, possibly, the need for more members of the faculty to discuss the purpose of each assignment with one another. While we only have results from the capstone project in the 2010-2011 school year, GACE scores from previous years and anecdotal evidence from the faculty suggests that this issue should be addressed.

New Action Plan

In order to improve our student's ability to write with a purpose and to re-enforce the idea that writing is a process we are doing two separate things. First, we are rewriting the SLOs for ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102 to making writing as a process an explicit element of those classes which will be evaluated by all instructors. Second, we are implementing a pilot program this Spring where students will engage in reflective writing at various points of the semester in order to evaluate their own writing. Research by writing studies scholars such as White and Yancy suggests that such reflective writing will give students a sense of ownership over their own writing and will help students articulate a better sense of purpose. Metacognitive benefits are also likely. In the spring semester of 2012 this program will be piloted in two classes: ENGL 3220: Advanced Composition and ENGL 4120: Shakespeare. Students in these courses will be tracked through their entrance into the capstone and we will compare their results with students who have not encountered these reflective writing assignments. If successful we plan on implementing these reflective writing assignments in a variety of upper-division courses.

Previous Action Plan

We have begun to implement our 2010-2011 action plan which called for the creation and implementation of courses designed to teach 20th century literature. Four courses have been created. These are ENGL 3470: Postcolonial World Literatures, ENGL 3460: Modern British Literature, ENGL 3510: Modern American Literature, and ENGL 3520: Postmodern and Contemporary American Literature. Modern British Literature is being offered this fall and Modern American will be offered in the spring. We will begin to monitor MFT scores this year for signs of improvement in this field but do not realistically expect to see improvement until next year.