

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Detailed Assessment Report

2015-2016 English MA

As of: 11/10/2016 03:24 PM CENTRAL

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked *One-Time, Recurring, No Request.*)

Mission / Purpose

The Master of Arts degree program in English addresses the professional needs of a variety of students: those who plan to continue in a Ph.D. program, those who want to teach at the high school or college levels, and those who wish to acquire professional training in writing or research. While pursuing a generalist background in literature, students also choose to focus on one of several options, including English and American Literature, American Culture, Creative Writing, ESOL, Folklore, Linguistics, Reading, or Rhetoric.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Themes and Forms from Literature in English

Students will demonstrate familiarity with and understanding of literary themes and forms from the history of English language literature.

Related Measures

M 1: Written Exam Component One

After all coursework has been completed, students will complete a comprehensive written exam component that includes material from across the historical range of literature written in English. A committee of three faculty members will separately evaluate each exam, and rate it high pass, pass, or fail.

The MA Program allows students to take a comprehensive exam or write a MA thesis.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

We expect 80% or more of students to attain high pass or pass on exam Component 1. Because so few students graduate annually, it is difficult to use annual statistics to assess accurately the achievement of this goal. Over the 6 year period 2004-2010, the passing rate for this component was over 92%, which is what caused the faculty last year to decide that not every student needed to take the exam, but could use the thesis in its place. With such a high level of success already it is not statistically valid to raise the expectation percentage by a few points so as to increase program excellence. Nor is it possible to expect students to have a breadth of knowledge that exceeds the breadth of English language literature. The basic requirement in the program intended to

address this goal – course distribution over 6 historical areas – is doing its job satisfactorily and cannot be increased or otherwise heightened. Thus it makes sense to collect data every semester and then assess outcomes statistically every 2 years, so that percentage statistics that accurately reflect the program's achievement level can be monitored for continued high performance.

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Met

In 2015-2016, three students chose to take written exams (as opposed to writing a thesis). All three students (100%) passed part 1 of their written exam.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Discuss raising standards

With 3 years of consistently meeting standards, the next step is to consider raising the standards or setting higher achievement goals on existing standards. The Graduate Faculty will meet to discuss what response is appropriate--philosophically, whether or not always increasing standards or goals is a reasonable institutional practice, and if so, if it is reasonable in this situation. Using the final test might be less than ideal for assessment because it does not assess students who resign before finishing the program.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: Medium

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Oral Exam | **Outcome/Objective:** Oral Communication

Measure: Written Exam Component One |

Outcome/Objective: Themes and Forms from Literature in English

Implementation Description: Discussion will occur in a fall meeting.

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

Discuss raising standards

The Graduate Coordinator will again bring up the question of whether standards should be raised, or whether a different assessment measure should be deployed. This discussion will take place at a Graduate Faculty Committee meeting during the fall 2014 semester.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Written Exam Component One |

Outcome/Objective: Themes and Forms from Literature in English

Projected Completion Date: 12/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

Add a new measure for MA written exams

It would appear that simply judging success on pass or fail for these written MA exams does not provide enough information for assessment purposes. Grad Coordinator responsible for assessment will discuss

with English graduate faculty the possibility of adding additional ways in which to measure what we are hoping to achieve in the English MA program.

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Written Exam Component One |

Outcome/Objective: Themes and Forms from Literature in English

Implementation Description: Discuss with graduate faculty

Projected Completion Date: 05/2016

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

SLO 2: Argument and Theory

Students will demonstrate the ability to formulate a rhetorical argument and utilize evidence and critical theories in support of that argument appropriate to their chosen area of specialization.

Related Measures

M 2: Written Exam Component Two

All students choosing to take the exam rather than the thesis option will complete a comprehensive written exam component that includes material from the student's chosen area of specialization. A committee of three faculty members will separately evaluate each exam, and rate it high pass, pass, or fail.

The MA Program allows students to take a comprehensive exam or write a MA thesis. In SY 10-11 5 students selected the exam option while 7 selected the thesis. Thus, evaluating the exams allows us to evaluate a healthy sample of student performance. The assessment officer will review all exams, results, and graders' comments to ensure consistency of evaluation.

Number of students assessed = 5

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

We expect 80% or more of students to attain high pass or pass on exam Component 2.

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Met

In 2015-2016, three students took written exams. All three (100%) passed the second component. There were no high passes.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Review of student progress

It is incumbent upon faculty to monitor student progress in the MA program. The program generally lasts only 2 years (4 semesters), so it is quite difficult for any monitoring process to recognize a lack of progress, diagnose what might be causing it, formulate an intervention plan to

improve student performance, and administer that intervention. Currently every student's transcript is reviewed at the end of each year by the Graduate Coordinator to look for signs of problems: low GPA, poor performance in a single course but generally good results in other courses, Incompletes, and Withdrawals. For the MA program, each student will be reviewed a single time. If a problem is indicated, the GC meets with the student early in the next semester to find out what is going on. If intervention seems necessary, the GC will meet with one or more of a student's professors to formulate an action plan. By this time, however, we will be well into the third semester, and the student should be starting on a thesis. So any resistance to mentoring will unfortunately register too late with the GC for anything to be done. The Faculty as a whole need to discuss what can be done for students earlier, and perhaps what steps can be taken to remove students who persist in failing to progress satisfactorily. This might result in the development of a removal policy, in refinement of the review process or mentoring process, or in the formulation of regular reminders to faculty to aid in recognizing problems in performance.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Written Exam Component Two |

Outcome/Objective: Argument and Theory

Implementation Description: Initial discussion at faculty meeting, subsequent discussion in online environment. Possible development of a removal policy, in refinement of the review process or mentoring process, or in the formulation of regular reminders to faculty to aid in recognizing problems in performance.

Projected Completion Date: 02/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

Review Assessment Measure

As with Component 1, the measure itself will be discussed at a Graduate Faculty meeting in the Fall 2014 semester.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Written Exam Component Two |

Outcome/Objective: Argument and Theory

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

SLO 3: Oral Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate their rhetorical arguments and results of their research orally in ways appropriate to their chosen area of specialization.

Connected Document

[MA in English Oral Exam Rubric](#)

Related Measures

M 3: Oral Exam

Each student will complete an oral exam component that includes material from the student's chosen area of specialization. A committee of three faculty members will evaluate each oral exam, and together rate it high pass, pass, or fail. In addition, each committee member will separately use the rubric designed for the exam to evaluate the student's oral exam on a four point scale of exceeding, meeting, approaching, or failing expectations.

The MA Program requires all students to complete an oral examination. Those who select a written comprehensive exam are examined orally over the range of their courses in their specialization. Those who select a thesis are examined over their thesis and related material. Our initial attempt has been to devise a single rubric that will adequately allow evaluation of the oral communication goal in either type of exam. The assessment officer will review all rubric results and graders' comments to ensure consistency of evaluation.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

We expect 80% or more of students to attain high pass or pass on the oral exam. We also expect 80% of students to at least meet expectations (2) on 3 of 4 rubric sub-measures, and we want 60% to exceed expectations (3) on 2 of 4 rubric sub-measures.

Connected Document

[MA in English Oral Exam Rubric](#)

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Partially Met

In 2015-2016, 3 students took written exams prior to their oral exam, and 5 wrote theses prior to their oral exams. All eight students (100%) passed their oral exams. However, of the three students who took written exams, only one scored multiple 3s (exceeds expectations). This one student achieved all 3s. The other two students scored mainly 1s and 2s. No student scored any 0s (fails) this year. However, the sample size is too small to indicate any statistically significant program improvement.

Moreover, faculty have been reporting scores only for students who have taken all exams. We do not have any rubrics submitted from the oral exams of those who wrote theses; we have only records of pass/fail. The rubric is designed to work for both types of exams, so more communication is needed to ensure faculty fill out the form in both circumstances.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Discuss raising standards

With 3 years of consistently meeting standards, the next step is to consider raising the standards or setting higher achievement goals on existing standards. The Graduate Faculty will meet to discuss what response is appropriate--philosophically, whether or not always increasing standards or goals is a reasonable institutional practice, and if so, if it is reasonable in this situation. Using the final test might be less than ideal for assessment because it does not assess students who resign before finishing the program.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: Medium

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Oral Exam | **Outcome/Objective:** Oral Communication

Measure: Written Exam Component One |
Outcome/Objective: Themes and Forms from Literature in English

Implementation Description: Discussion will occur in a fall meeting.

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

Improving standards and performance on oral components

The results of this 2014-2015's MA oral exams was disappointing and the fact that all three students received a "Fails" [0] from at least one assessor on at least one sub-measure suggests that action needs to be taken in classes leading up to these MA oral exams in order not only to prepare students for the exams, but to prepare them for their future careers.

Graduate Coordinator will discuss with graduate faculty the possibility of including more oral components in classes, as well as identifying for students the necessity for gaining skill in this area.

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Oral Exam | **Outcome/Objective:** Oral Communication

Implementation Description: See above

Projected Completion Date: 05/2016

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate Coordinator

Rubric submission rates

In 2015-2016, faculty submitted MA oral exam rubrics only for students who have done oral exams. No rubrics were submitted for students who did theses. The graduate coordinators will address this issue with the Graduate Committee to raise faculty buy-in rates.

Established in Cycle: 2015-2016

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: Medium

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Oral Exam | **Outcome/Objective:** Oral Communication

Projected Completion Date: 10/2016

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

How were assessment results shared and evaluated within the unit?

The graduate coordinators discussed the results and then presented them to the English Graduate Committee.

Identify which action plans [created in prior cycle(s)] were implemented in this current cycle. For each of these implemented plans, were there any measurable or perceivable effects? How, if at all, did the findings appear to be affected by the implemented action plan?

Improving student performance on oral assignments and exam components has been a

target of this past year, but it is still a work in progress. More of our graduate courses now include significant graded oral components, such as conference-style papers. We will need to track if the students who are going through these classes perform better on their oral exams.

What has the unit learned from the current assessment cycle? What is working well, and what is working less well in achieving desired outcomes?

The unit has learned that our MA students who choose the exam-only route are often producing only satisfactory but not strong results by the end of the program. We will need to discuss how to improve outcomes for these students. The graduate coordinator has drawn this to the attention of the Graduate Committee so that we can discuss possible courses of action; perhaps we should encourage more students to do the thesis route, but we have little data at this point to assess whether thesis students actually do perform better.