

**Oakland University**  
**Department of English--Assessment of Undergraduate Major**

**1. Citation of appropriate goals from Oakland University's Mission Statement.**

- a) “. . . develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes essential for successful living and active, concerned citizenship.”
- b) “. . . prepare students for post-baccalaureate education” or “professional schools. . .”

**2. Specification of academic goals that flow from each of the cited university goals.**

“By majoring in English, students can enhance appreciation of literary masterpieces, gain critical understanding of imaginative writing and develop sensitivity to the uses of language while developing skills in analysis, research and communication. Such knowledge enriches all aspects of life, while such skills prepare students for careers in law, business, publishing, medical professions, library science, journalism, government and education.”

- a) Majors in English should “acquire a knowledge of the basic tools of literary analysis, and of the distinctive qualities of various genres and forms of expression. . .
- b) . . .gain some knowledge of the historical development of literature and of the relationship between literary expression and the cultural climate from which it springs. . .
- c) . . .develop their writing skills both as tools for the exploration of ideas and as practical skills for everyday living.”

**3. Implementation of the unit's goals into learning outcomes for students.**

a) In the 400-level seminars, a research paper or similar instrument will demonstrate knowledge of literary analysis in explication of texts. Indicators of success can include the use of appropriate literary terminology and the presentation of well-developed statements demonstrating knowledge of literary analysis. These instruments will also incorporate and apply historical and cultural information in the explication of texts; they can do so by applying accurate historical and/or cultural information, and by presenting well-developed statements explaining how historical and/or cultural information relates to texts. The work should be a demonstration of lucid, coherent writing that contains appropriate focus and structure, shows skillful use of source material, uses standard constructions, unambiguous sentences and effective transitions, and contains sophisticated, varied sentence structure.

b) English majors will be adequately prepared for success in graduate programs or professional schools. In order to measure satisfaction with professional preparation, a questionnaire will be distributed to English alumni on a triennial basis.

**4. Description of the methods by which progress toward meeting the unit goals will be measured.**

a) *Direct Measure* (Seminar Papers): After visiting students and those who are not seniors or English majors are removed from the classroom populations, papers routinely prepared by students for their senior seminars are collected for assessment, with three (20%) papers taken more or less at random from each seminar. Over the course of a calendar year, we gather 24-30 such papers. Names of writers are

deleted, and copies of the papers are reproduced before seminar instructors have made any comments or grades. The Undergraduate Program Committee (5-6 members of the Department, selected by the Chair for 2-3 year terms) assesses the collected papers for evidence of skill in literary analysis, awareness of different genres and forms of expression, historical perspective, and quality of writing. In order to reach a consensus, each paper is evaluated by at least two members of the committee in regard to each of the three assessment goals. Each reader assigns a score for each category (i.e. 1 = unsatisfactory, 2 = satisfactory, 3 = excellent). The Committee has found it beneficial to discuss any significant variation in responses. After all responses are taken into account, the Committee prepares a summary written report, including both the average scores for each goal and comments by the readers about trends of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the students' achievement of the assessment goals and in comparison to the previous year's findings. This report is presented to the Department for discussion and possible action.

**b) *Indirect Measures*** (Exit and Alumni Surveys): An open-ended questionnaire is distributed to the seminar population above (see 4. a). This questionnaire affords students the opportunity to comment on what they perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of their major course of study as they near its conclusion. Each year members of the Undergraduate Programs Committee assess these evaluations. Because the questions are open-ended, the responses do not ordinarily lend themselves to tabulation. The Undergraduate Programs Committee prepares a summary report which is presented to the Department for discussion and possible action. On a triennial basis, another open-ended questionnaire is mailed to about 160 randomly selected alumni (these surveys include a stamped return envelope). This questionnaire affords alumni the opportunity to reflect upon what they perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of their major course of study after five or more years of advanced education, professional growth, and/or civic life. Because the questions are open-ended, the responses do not ordinarily lend themselves to tabulation. The Undergraduate Programs Committee prepares a summary report which is presented to the Department for discussion and possible action.

##### **5. Identify who has the primary responsibility for administering assessment activity.**

Results from all of our assessment data collection activities are regularly examined to determine if any program changes are needed. The seminar papers, exit and alumni questionnaires are evaluated by members of the Undergraduate Programs Committee. The Committee reports to the Chair and shares its findings with the entire Department.

##### **6. Describe the procedures used in your academic unit for translating assessment results into program changes.**

Departmental faculty meetings are held every month throughout the year. At one of these meetings, faculty members are invited to respond to the assessment results. Meetings such as these result in programmatic or curricular changes (in recent years—and as a direct result of assessment—some of these have included: a Departmental recommendation that instructors pay closer attention to close reading in class assignments and discussion, the decision to commit to the use of a literary handbook in Departmental classes (*The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*), and the creation of two courses: English 210, Writing About Literature and ENG 215, Fundamentals Of Grammar). Departmental members discuss assessment-related topics on an on-going basis.

Goal Cited in OU Mission	Relevant Goal of Unit	Student Learning Outcomes	Methods of Assessment	Individual(s) Responsible for Assessment Activities	Procedures for Using Assessment Results to Improve Program
“. . .develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes. . .”	“. . .acquire a knowledge of the basic tools of literary analysis, and of the distinctive qualities of various genres and forms of expression. . .”	“. . .identification of appropriate terminology and the definition of literary terms, and the presentation of well-developed statements demonstrating knowledge of literary texts.”	Annual evaluation of randomly selected ENG 400-level seminar papers	English Department, Undergraduate Programs Committee	Undergraduate Programs Committee’s reports and recommendations are brought to the Department for discussion and possible action
“. . .develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes. . .”	“. . .gain some knowledge of the historical development of literature and of the relationship between literary expression and the cultural climate from which it springs. . .”	identification of “accurate historical and/or cultural information” and presentation of “well-developed statements explaining how historical and/or cultural information relates to texts.”	Annual evaluation of randomly selected ENG 400-level seminar papers	English Department, Undergraduate Programs Committee	Undergraduate Programs Committee’s reports and recommendations are brought to the Department for discussion and possible action
“. . .develop the skills, knowledge,	develop “writing skills both as tools	“. . .a demonstration of	Annual evaluation of randomly	English Department,	Undergraduate Programs

and attitudes. . .	for the exploration of ideas and as practical skills for everyday living.”	lucid, coherent writing that contains appropriate focus and structure, shows skillful use of source material, uses standard constructions, unambiguous sentences and effective transitions, and contains sophisticated, varied sentence structure.”	selected ENG 400-level seminar papers	Undergraduate Programs Committee	Committee’s reports and recommendations are brought to the Department for discussion and possible action
. . .essential for successful living and active citizenship. . . and prepare students for post-baccalaureate education” or “professional schools. . .”	enrich “all aspects of life” and “prepare students for careers”	English majors will be adequately prepared for career work, for graduate or professional schools; students express satisfaction with the program of study at and after graduation	Triennial alumni surveys	English Department, Undergraduate Programs Committee	Undergraduate Programs Committee’s reports and recommendations are brought to the Department for discussion and possible action