

**Assessment Report
English Department
2011-12/2012-13**

2011-2012 was a busy and very productive year for us regarding assessment. Having been urged, last year, to work on “closing the loop,” I am happy to report that we’ve had great success in this area. We’re beginning to see concrete changes resulting from our assessment efforts, changes that will help us deliver a curriculum that more fully meets our shared goals and expectations.

Our assessment efforts were led by our Curriculum Committee. In five separate department meetings and one off-campus retreat, we explored the following issues:

1. The role of EN 110: Introduction to Literary Studies
2. The place of literary history in our curriculum
3. The place of literary research in our curriculum
4. The relationship between literary studies and creative writing

The goal of these discussions was to revise our “Canon of Methods” document so that we would have a clearer sense of what our students should learn at each level, and a stronger sense of buy-in from the faculty. We devoted our off-campus retreat, funded by the Teagle Grant, to this revision, and the CC subsequently presented a revised document, “Goals and Expectations for the English Major,” to the department. There was general agreement that this document accurately reflects and should guide our work in the classroom, though tensions between faculty autonomy and shared values remain.

One way to resolve those tensions would be to get a better sense of where we’re delivering what we’ve agreed upon, and where we’re not. Toward that end, I worked with Lisa Christenson at the end of the spring semester 2012 to put together an online survey mapping our goals and expectations onto our graduating seniors’ experience of the major. I emailed 68 graduating majors, 31 of whom completed the survey (see attachment), for a very strong response rate of 46%. The results were very interesting, and we devoted our first department meeting of 2012-13 to a discussion of them.

In addition, our assessment conversations helped us to resolve a lingering issue over the structure of our English minors. With a better sense of the relationship between literary studies and creative writing, we were able to approve a revision to our minors that has since been approved by the College’s Curriculum Committee.

Finally, our retreat led to our creative writers bringing a proposal to revise the sequence of courses leading to the creative writing capstone, a version of which was approved in fall 2012.

To complement our work in the spring of 2012, this spring we surveyed the faculty about where in their courses they fulfill our “Goals and Expectations for the English Major” (see attachment), and we’ll discuss the results during our first department meeting in the coming fall. This will allow us to better deliver our current curriculum, even as we take the first steps toward the curricular overhaul that we’ve agreed to begin next year.

Our assessment efforts over the past two years convince me that we were right, two years ago, to adopt a more flexible assessment approach. Rather than follow a rigid schedule, we’ve conducted assessments in response to questions of the moment. This seems a good way to proceed as we work on our curricular revision in the coming year.

1. To what extent did your English 110 class improve your ability to do the following?

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Frame questions about how to read and write within the discipline of literary studies	44.8% (13)	37.9% (11)	13.8% (4)	3.4% (1)	29
Read closely and attend to the complexity of language	55.2% (16)	24.1% (7)	13.8% (4)	6.9% (2)	29
Formulate questions about an author's formal choices and draw inferences from patterns (of language, verse, imagery)	62.1% (18)	13.8% (4)	17.2% (5)	6.9% (2)	29
Craft and support a thesis	31.0% (9)	44.8% (13)	17.2% (5)	6.9% (2)	29
Recognize historical and cultural contexts and their bearing on literary meanings	17.2% (5)	44.8% (13)	27.6% (8)	10.3% (3)	29
Engage with secondary readings pertinent to the texts and questions of the course	6.9% (2)	41.4% (12)	41.4% (12)	10.3% (3)	29
Advance class conversation through active listening and appropriately informed contributions	41.4% (12)	27.6% (8)	20.7% (6)	10.3% (3)	29
answered question					29
skipped question					0

2. In your English 110 class, to what extent did you become familiar with the following?

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
The conventions of specific genres	25.0% (7)	42.9% (12)	21.4% (6)	10.7% (3)	28
Literary terms	27.6% (8)	51.7% (15)	17.2% (5)	3.4% (1)	29
Critical perspectives, methods, and theories	28.6% (8)	42.9% (12)	21.4% (6)	7.1% (2)	28
The conventions of written literary analysis and documentation	31.0% (9)	37.9% (11)	17.2% (5)	13.8% (4)	29
Periods of literary history	10.3% (3)	20.7% (6)	48.3% (14)	20.7% (6)	29
Library resources	3.4% (1)	34.5% (10)	48.3% (14)	13.8% (4)	29
answered question					29
skipped question					0

3. To what extent did your work in 200-level English LITERATURE courses improve your ability to do the following?

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Situate a text in relation to forms/genres/literary periods	48.3% (14)	41.4% (12)	10.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	29
Read against a text, that is, to question its ideological or social assumptions	48.3% (14)	41.4% (12)	3.4% (1)	6.9% (2)	29
Define a topic independently	48.3% (14)	37.9% (11)	10.3% (3)	3.4% (1)	29
Engage the work of other critics and scholars in class discussion	31.0% (9)	37.9% (11)	27.6% (8)	3.4% (1)	29
Engage the work of other critics in written work	37.9% (11)	31.0% (9)	20.7% (6)	10.3% (3)	29
Carry out basic research appropriate to literary studies	27.6% (8)	41.4% (12)	24.1% (7)	6.9% (2)	29
answered question					29
skipped question					0

4. For students of CREATIVE WRITING, to what extent did your 200-level CREATIVE WRITING courses improve your ability to do the following?

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Critique professional writing in workshop settings	52.6% (10)	31.6% (6)	15.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	19
Critique the work of your peers in workshop settings	78.9% (15)	15.8% (3)	5.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	19
Write fiction, poems, or essays that demonstrate fluency in the appropriate conventions	73.7% (14)	21.1% (4)	5.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	19
answered question					19
skipped question					10

5. To what extent did your work in 300-level English LITERATURE courses improve your ability to do the following?

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Read and interpret a work of literature independently	96.6% (28)	3.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	29
Sustain a complex argument	86.2% (25)	13.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	29
Conduct research in support of a sustained analytical paper	86.2% (25)	13.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	29
answered question					29
skipped question					0

6. For students of CREATIVE WRITING, to what extent did your 300-level CREATIVE WRITING courses improve your ability to

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Write with technical sophistication in relation to formal conventions	64.7% (11)	29.4% (5)	5.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	17
answered question					17
skipped question					12

7. To what extent did your work in English CAPSTONE help you do the following:

	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all	Response Count
Take the initiative to plan and organize your projects	82.8% (24)	10.3% (3)	6.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	29
Work independently to sustain projects through the various stages	75.9% (22)	17.2% (5)	6.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	29
Produce a major project that synthesizes and reflects back upon work already completed in the major	79.3% (23)	10.3% (3)	10.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	29
Demonstrate awareness of the wider critical or artistic context that informs the project being completed	79.3% (23)	10.3% (3)	10.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	29
Participate in a community of other writers and artists whose work you were expected to critique in an engaged and constructive way	51.7% (15)	37.9% (11)	6.9% (2)	3.4% (1)	29
answered question					29
skipped question					0

To what degree did you address the following goals and expectations in your F12-S13 classes? 0=none; 1=a little; 2=a moderate amount; 3=a great deal												
	AVG	110 avg	Forms	Context	200LIT	300LIT	375	LIT AVG	200CW	300CW	CW AVG	
1) frame questions about how we read and write within the discipline of literary studies	2.60	3.00	2.75	2.67	2.83	2.52	2.67	2.67	2.00	2.00	2.00	
2) read closely and to attend to the complexity of language	2.98	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.95	3.00	2.97	3.00	3.00	3.00	
3) formulate questions about an author's formal choices and draw inferences from patterns (of language, verse, imagery)	2.74	2.83	2.50	2.89	2.78	2.71	2.67	2.74	2.00	3.00	2.63	
4) craft and support a thesis	1.96	2.65	1.83	2.32	2.27	2.14	3.00	2.20	0.67	0.00	0.25	
5) recognize historical and cultural contexts and their bearing on literary meanings	2.32	2.42	2.08	2.50	2.36	2.67	3.00	2.53	1.67	1.00	1.25	
6) engage with secondary readings pertinent to the texts and questions of the course	2.01	2.00	1.25	2.28	1.75	2.52	3.00	2.17	1.33	1.20	1.25	
7) advance class conversation through active listening and appropriately informed contributions	2.84	3.00	2.88	3.00	2.94	2.67	3.00	2.79	2.83	3.00	2.94	
8) familiarity with the conventions of specific genres	2.51	2.67	2.58	2.67	2.56	2.24	2.00	2.38	3.00	3.00	3.00	
9) familiarity with literary terms	2.22	2.83	2.25	2.47	2.29	1.98	2.00	2.12	2.67	2.00	2.25	
10) familiarity with critical perspectives, methods, and theories	2.02	2.25	1.33	2.22	1.78	2.50	3.00	2.17	1.33	1.00	1.13	
11) familiarity with the conventions of written literary analysis and documentation	1.83	2.67	1.42	2.11	1.83	1.95	2.67	1.90	1.00	0.80	0.88	
12) familiarity with periods of literary history	1.86	1.67	1.79	2.00	1.97	2.10	1.67	2.04	1.33	1.00	1.13	
13) familiarity with library resources	1.52	1.75	1.27	1.39	1.36	1.81	3.00	1.60	1.00	0.80	0.86	
14) situate a text in relation to forms/genres/literary periods	2.48	2.17	2.38	2.33	2.53	2.62	2.33	2.58	1.33	2.80	2.25	
15) read against a text, that is, to question its ideological or social assumptions	2.21	2.17	2.08	2.22	2.17	2.62	3.00	2.41	2.00	0.80	1.25	
16) define a topic independently	2.52	2.17	2.42	2.28	2.42	2.71	3.00	2.58	2.00	2.80	2.50	
17) engage the work of other critics and scholars, both in class discussion and in written work	2.03	2.17	1.58	2.06	1.86	2.52	3.00	2.22	1.33	0.80	1.00	

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