

Assessment Cycle 2021-2022

Program: Master of Arts in English (MA) (529)

College: Arts and Sciences

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Northwestern State University Mission: Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Graduate School Mission: Northwestern State University's Graduate School maintains as its mission and purpose to develop, provide, and support innovative, responsive, and accessible graduate programs of the highest quality. The Graduate School encourages mastery of disciplinary literature, innovative research, and professional development and practice opportunities. It further supports research by members of its scholarly community. The Graduate School is a source of intellectual capital for the University and contributes to the public welfare of the region, state, and nation.

Department of English, Foreign Language, And Cultural Studies Mission: The Department of English, Foreign Languages and Cultural Studies is a dynamic, student-oriented program preparing students to achieve in diverse fields. The Department cultivates innovative, responsive, and accessible education of the highest level. We provide versatility through a range of digital literacies; our students build creative, cultural, critical, linguistic, and compositional skills—all in a contemporary digital context. Dedicated to preparing students to thrive in an ever-changing cultural and workplace environment, we support research, innovation, experiential learning, and creative endeavors by students and faculty.

English Master's Degree Program Mission: The Graduate Program of the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Cultural Studies is a dynamic, student-oriented program focused on rigorously preparing students to achieve in diverse fields. The English M.A. degree focuses on developing, providing, and supporting forward thinking, responsive, and accessible graduate education of the highest level. Through concentrations in Folklife and Southern Culture, Literature, TESOL, Writing and Linguistics, the Graduate Program encourages a mastery of discipline-specific literature, thoughtful research, professional development, and cross-curricular innovation as members of an engaged scholarly community. Offering its students access to creative, critical, and compositional skills and experiences, the Graduate Program provides invaluable versatility in a rapidly changing world.

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Methodology:

1. Assessment tools are completed by Graduate Faculty in English and returned to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in English the week of Thesis defenses each term (Summer, Fall, and Spring for each reporting cycle).
2. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies in English assembles, collates, and analyzes the data.
3. Results from the assessments are discussed with Graduate Faculty in English.
4. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies in English, in consultation with the Department Head and Graduate Faculty, will propose an action plan (if there are needed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools, and/or curricula or program) in response to assessment findings.
5. The program will implement the action plan in the next assessment reporting cycle.

Student Learning Outcome

SLO 1. Ideas: Students will employ creative thinking, innovation, and creative inquiry.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives

ENG 5980: Thesis

ENG 6950: Research Problems

Measure 1.1 (Direct—Student Artifact)

Each of the five concentrations in the M.A. program in English offers two options for degree completion:

Thesis Option: Students choosing to write a thesis as the culminating project for their degree will enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis. A fully approved thesis proposal must be on file in the Department and the Graduate School prior to registration for thesis hours. Thesis students must successfully defend the thesis prior to graduation. Thesis students complete 24 hours of course work (8 classes) and 6 hours of thesis, ENGL 5980, in which the thesis will be written and defended.

Papers-in-lieu (PIL) Option: Students choosing to write papers-in-lieu as their culminating project for their degree must enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Research Problems. An overview of the papers must be created in consultation with the project director prior to registration for research hours. The papers must be approved by the student's director and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. PIL students complete 27 hours of

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course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Research Problems, ENGL 6950, in which two research papers-in-lieu of thesis will be written and submitted.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion options and the assessment columns for each outcome.

All students will achieve an average of 8.45 or higher on the revised rubric for “Ideas”: student “employ[s] creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry.”

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target of 8.25 was met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.27. In accordance with the plan of action from AC 2020-2021, additions were made to the curriculum of ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program. The new components— a reading by Tressie McMillan Cottom and application of its concepts in new requirements in two existing assignments— integrated further capacity for creative and innovative development into the critical processes that enable students to develop and establish research-based writing.

As a result, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met, as the four students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.75. The decrease in average from AC 2020-2021 to AC 2021-2022 results partly from the small number of students completing the degree in the latter as well as one low score. With that outlying score removed, the cohort’s average substantially exceeds the target with a score of 9.33. Nevertheless, the arithmetic mean of the complete cohort must be taken seriously with regard to the assessment maintenance, and advancement of the program.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 result, in AC 2022-2023, the Graduate Program in English will implement the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. A targeted professional development workshop will be developed with Graduate English faculty.

In preparation for a professional development workshop, during Summer 2022 Graduate English faculty will be surveyed regarding specific ways they support student understanding of what constitutes creative thinking and creative inquiry in their individual courses. Additionally, the survey will inquire how the faculty’s assignments implement and assess student practice and application of these objectives. A workshop will be designed in response to the information and materials faculty provide. Faculty with innovative and comprehensive applications of SLO 1 will share their approaches, the session will further improvement by directly addressing areas for improvement evidenced by the survey results, and faculty will articulate concrete revisions or additions they will effect in upcoming courses.

On the rubric, the AC 2022-2023 target for this measure will be set at 8.35 to promote continuous improvement.

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SLO 2. Context: Students will demonstrate a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices in their chosen concentration.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives

ENG 5980: Thesis

ENG 6950: Research Problems

Measure 2.1 (Direct—Student Artifact)

Each of the five concentrations in the M.A. program in English offers two options for degree completion:

Thesis Option: Students choosing to write a thesis as the culminating project for their degree will enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis. A fully approved thesis proposal must be on file in the Department and the Graduate School prior to registration for thesis hours. Thesis students must successfully defend the thesis prior to graduation. Thesis students complete 24 hours of course work (8 classes) and 6 hours of thesis, ENGL 5980, in which the thesis will be written and defended.

Papers-in-lieu Option: Students choosing to write papers-in-lieu as their culminating project for their degree must enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Research Problems. An overview of the papers must be created in consultation with the project director prior to registration for research hours. The papers must be approved by the student's director and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. PIL students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Research Problems, ENGL 6950, in which two research papers-in-lieu of thesis will be written and submitted.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion options and the assessment columns for each outcome.

All students will achieve an average of 8.25 or higher on the revised rubric for "Context": student "demonstrate[s] a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices."

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target the target of 9.0 was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.73. As a result, the curriculum of ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program, was revised in to increase analysis of and reflection on methods and critical assumptions of discipline specific journals and to model research methods proposed by Tressie McMillan Cottom in line with development of theoretical and category-based methods of developing research-based analyses.

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As a result, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met, as the four students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.25. The decrease in average from AC 2020-2021 to AC 2021-2022 results partly from the small number of students completing the degree in the latter as well as one low score. With that outlying score removed, the cohort's average exceeds the target with a score of 8.33. Nevertheless, the arithmetic mean of the complete cohort must be taken seriously regarding the assessment, maintenance, and advancement of the program. Because the average for SLO 2 is the lowest of the four averaged scores, it is determined to represent the most significant area requiring revision to support the success and improvement of the program.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 results, in AC 2022-2023, the Graduate Program in English will implement the following changes to drive continuous improvement through revisions to ENGL 5800, the course required of all students in the English MA program, and through a targeted professional development workshop with Graduate English faculty.

In preparation for a professional development workshop, during Summer 2022 Graduate English faculty will be surveyed regarding specific ways they teach students about critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices in their individual courses. Additionally, the survey will inquire how the faculty's assignments implement and test student command of these objectives. A workshop will be designed in response to the information and materials faculty provide. Faculty with innovative and comprehensive applications of SLO 2 will share their approaches, the session will further improvement by directly addressing areas for improvement evidenced by the survey results, and faculty will articulate concrete revisions or additions they will effect in upcoming courses.

In ENGL 5800, an assignment focused on the application of critical practices and methodologies—the “Best Practices” assignment— will be substantially expanded. The assignment previously asked students to propose and assess methodologies and critical practices, and the revised iteration will require the students to implement, justify, and reflect on methodologies and critical assumptions.

On the rubric, the AC 2022-2023 target for this measure will be set at 8.0 to promote continuous improvement.

SLO 3. Research/Discourses: Students will conduct, analyze, synthesize, and contextualize relevant research within their English concentration.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives

ENG 5980: Thesis

ENG 6950: Research Problems

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Measure 3.1 (direct—student artifact)

Each of the five concentrations in the M.A. program in English offers two options for degree completion:

Thesis Option: Students choosing to write a thesis as the culminating project for their degree will enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis. A fully approved thesis proposal must be on file in the Department and the Graduate School prior to registration for thesis hours. Thesis students must successfully defend the thesis prior to graduation. Thesis students complete 24 hours of course work (8 classes) and 6 hours of thesis, ENGL 5980, in which the thesis will be written and defended.

Papers-in-lieu Option: Students choosing to write papers-in-lieu as their culminating project for their degree must enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Research Problems. An overview of the papers must be created in consultation with the project director prior to registration for research hours. The papers must be approved by the student's director and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. PIL students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Research Problems, ENGL 6950, in which two research papers-in-lieu of thesis will be written and submitted.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion options and the assessment columns for each outcome.

All students will achieve an average of 8.25 or higher on the revised rubric for "Research/Discourses": student "conduct[s], analyze[s], synthesize[s], and contextualize[s] relevant research within their English concentration."

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target of 8.5 was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.93. As a result, the professional development session originally planned for AC 2020-21 was conducted in AC 2021-2022 and readings on literature were changed in ENGL 5800, the course required for all students in the English MA program.

As a result, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met, as the four students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.25. The decrease in average from AC 2020-2021 to AC 2021-2022 results partly from the small number of students completing the degree in the latter as well as one low score. With that outlying score removed, the cohort's average exceeds the target with a score of 8.33. Nevertheless, the arithmetic mean of the complete cohort must be taken seriously with regard to the assessment, maintenance, and advancement of the program

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 results, in AC 2022-2023, the Graduate Program in English will implement the following changes to drive continuous improvement through revisions to ENGL 5800, the course required of all students in the

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English MA program, and through a targeted professional development workshop with Graduate English faculty.

In preparation for a professional development workshop, during Summer 2022 Graduate English faculty will be surveyed regarding specific ways they teach literature review in their individual courses and their direction of thesis and PIL projects. Additionally, the survey will inquire how the faculty's assignments (and, in the case of theses and PIL projects, their instruction) implements and test student command of these identification, synthesis, and contextualization of pertinent critical conversations. A workshop will be designed in response to the information and materials faculty provide. Faculty with innovative and comprehensive applications of SLO 3 will share their approaches, the session will further improvement by directly addressing areas for improvement evidenced by the survey results, and faculty will articulate concrete revisions or additions they will effect in upcoming courses.

In ENGL 5800, two assignments related to literature review will be expanded to implement John Creswell's concept of a research map. A reflection on the current I-Search paper will require students to sketch a provisional research map following Creswell, and an annotated bibliography for the "Final Proposal" assignment will require inclusion of a research map that both reflects the sources in the bibliography and supports the effective development and writing of the "Final Proposal" composition with particular regard to literature review.

On the rubric, the AC 2022-2023 target for this measure will be set at 8.35 to promote continuous improvement.

SLO 4. Form: Students will practice sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions and genre expectations within their chosen MA concentration.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives

ENG 5980: Thesis

ENG 6950: Research Problems

Measure 4.1 (direct—student artifact)

Each of the five concentrations in the M.A. program in English offers two options for degree completion:

Thesis Option: Students choosing to write a thesis as the culminating project for their degree will enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis. A fully approved thesis proposal must be on file in the Department and the Graduate School prior to registration for thesis hours. Thesis students must successfully defend the thesis prior to graduation. Thesis students

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complete 24 hours of course work (8 classes) and 6 hours of thesis, ENGL 5980, in which the thesis will be written and defended.

Papers-in-lieu Option: Students choosing to write papers-in-lieu as their culminating project for their degree must enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Research Problems. An overview of the papers must be created in consultation with the project director prior to registration for research hours. The papers must be approved by the student's director and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. PIL students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Research Problems, ENGL 6950, in which two research papers-in-lieu of thesis will be written and submitted.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion options and the assessment columns for each outcome.

All students will achieve an average of 8.65 or higher on the revised rubric for "Form": student "practice[s] sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions and genre expectations."

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target of 8.75 was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.4. As a result, changes were made to ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program: reflective writing prompts were revised to direct students to articulate lessons of advanced composition gained by reading scholarly publications, and grading prompts were amended to highlight the written component of each major assignment.

As a result, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met, as the four students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.75. The decrease in average from AC 2020-2021 to AC 2021-2022 results partly from the small number of students completing the degree in the latter as well as one low score. With that outlying score removed, the cohort's average meets the target with a score of 8.66. Nevertheless, the arithmetic mean of the complete cohort must be taken seriously with regard to the assessment, maintenance, and advancement of the program

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 results, in AC 2022-2023, the Graduate Program in English will implement the following changes to drive continuous improvement through a targeted professional development workshop with Graduate English faculty.

In preparation for a professional development workshop, during Summer 2022 Graduate English faculty will be surveyed regarding specific ways they teach appropriate and effective writing skills in their individual courses. Additionally, the survey will inquire how the faculty evaluation and feedback on written work supports and strengthens compositional skills. A workshop will be designed in response to the information and materials faculty provide. Faculty with innovative and comprehensive applications of SLO

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4 will share their approaches, the session will further improvement by directly addressing areas for improvement evidenced by the survey results, and faculty will articulate concrete revisions or additions they will affect in upcoming courses.

On the rubric, the AC 2022-2023 target for this measure will be set at 8.5 to promote continuous improvement.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2021-2022. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of AC 2020-2021 results.

- Revisions to ENGL 5800 implemented.
- Professional development sessions with Graduate English faculty conducted.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

- Targets for all four SLOs in 2022-2023 have been set with consideration of the 2021-2022 averages but also with acknowledgment that one score of the four-person cohort was a low outlier for each SLO.
- In the program's required course ENGL 5800,
 - Revise the existing "Best Practices" assignment such that students must not only propose appropriate methodologies but also implement, justify, and reflect on methodologies and critical assumptions, and
 - Revise two existing assignments to include and apply Creswell's "literature map" in support of more effective and more effectively conceptualized literature review.
- A series of targeted professional development workshops for graduate faculty— one for each of the four SLOs— will
 - Survey faculty regarding their current practices in advance to enable the workshop's design to pursue areas where improvement is most needed and to facilitate faculty exchange and learning from current practices by their colleagues that are particularly effective and innovative regarding each specific SLO,
 - Target pedagogies and course components that demonstrate need for revision and enhancement for each of the four SLOs, and

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- Conclude with faculty articulating concrete revisions to their graduate courses in support of persistent improvement regarding each of the four SLOs.