Assessment Cycle

Academic Year 2017 – 2018

English Master's Program

College: Arts and Sciences

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UNIVERSITY MISSION:
Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

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:
[Not yet available.]

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 Director of Graduate Studies in English the week of Thesis defenses each term (Summer, Fall, and Spring for each reporting cycle);

2. The Director 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 Director 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 1

Students will employ creative thinking, innovation, and creative inquiry.

MEASURE 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.

Acceptable Target: All students achieve an average of <u>3.5</u> or higher on the rubric

Takes a reasoned approach to the topic, builds from an adequately-defined argument and clear thesis, and makes an acceptable contribution to the field of study

Ideal Target: All students achieve a 5.0 on the rubric

Takes an innovative approach to the topic, builds from a well-defined argument and challenging thesis, and makes an original and significant contribution to the field of study

Findings for Measure 1: Critical Inquiry

Summary of Findings: 31 students completed their extended, research based writing project in the 2016 cycle with an arithmetic mean of <u>4.88</u> on the rubric for employment of creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry.

Results: Acceptable Target Achievement: Met; Ideal Target Achievement: Approaching

Action (Decision or Recommendation): Based on our findings that our graduates achieved an average of 4.88 on Measure One with an achievement target of 3.5, we determined that although there is no action needed, we continue to strive to improve. Thus, to further assist in moving from taking a reasoned approach, adequately argued regarding their chosen topic to taking interesting and innovative approaches that make original contributions to the field, we are redesigning the required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better encourage students to develop their authorial voices.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME 2

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

MEASURE 2 (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.

Acceptable Target: All students achieve an average of 3.5 or higher on the rubric

Situates the project within a particular theoretical framework, provides some rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies

Ideal Target: All students achieve a 5.0 on the rubric

Situates the project within a well-defined critical and theoretical framework, provides a compelling rationale for that approach, and proceeds through clearly-related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies.

Findings for Measure 2: Critical Methodologies and Practices

Summary of Findings: 31 students completed their extended, research based writing project in the 2016 cycle with an arithmetic mean of 4.82 on the rubric for demonstrating a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices.

Results: Acceptable Target Achievement: Exceeded; Ideal Target Achievement: Approaching

Action (Decision or Recommendation): Based on our findings that our graduates achieved an average of 4.82 on Measure Two with an achievement target of 3.5, we determined that although there is no action needed, we continue to strive to improve to further encourage students to situate their scholarly projects within a clearly-defined theoretical framework and communicate a compelling rationale for that approach within the relevant methodologies of their chosen field of study. Thus, we are redesigning the required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better encourage students to deeply delve into research methods within their chosen concentrations.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME 3

Students will conduct, analyze, and synthesize relevant research within their English concentration to enter the scholarly conversation as a peer.

MEASURE 3 (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.

Acceptable Target: All students achieve an average of 3.5 or higher on the rubric.

Locates the project within an academic context through a review of literature that presents an analysis and synthesis of significant and relevant research and suggests how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation.

Ideal Target: All students achieve a 5 on the rubric.

Locates the project within a clearly-defined academic context through a thorough review of literature that presents a critical analysis and synthesis of significant and relevant research and makes evident how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation.

Findings for Measure 3: Relevant Research

Summary of Findings: 31 students completed their extended, research based writing project in the 2015-16 cycle with an arithmetic mean of 4.70 on the rubric for conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant research in their field of study.

Results: Acceptable Target Achievement: Exceeded; Ideal Target Achievement: Approaching

Action (Decision or Recommendation): Based on our findings that our graduates achieved an average of 4.70 on Measure Three with an achievement target of 3.5, we determined that although there is no action needed, we note that the outcomes for Measure 3 and 4 are the lowest scores for our students. This fact triggered our redesign of the required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better prepare students at an early point in their degree program so they can delve deeply into research and gain mastery in their chosen field of study and area of expertise by better conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant research.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME 4

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

MEASURE 4 (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.

Acceptable Target: All students achieve an average of <u>3.5</u> or higher on the rubric

Follows conventions for academic written English and communicates essential information coherently; evidences a sense of audience; organized with transitions and flow for a cohesive argument; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide.

Ideal Target: All students achieve a 5.0 on the rubric.

Follows conventions for academic written English and communicates essential information with clarity, precision, and coherence; evidences a strong sense of audience and tone; well-organized with appropriate transitions and logical flow for a cohesive argument; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide.

Findings for Measure 4: Writing Skills

Summary of Findings: 31 students completed their extended, research based writing project in the 2015-16 cycle with an arithmetic mean of 4.70 on the rubric for practicing sophisticated writing skills appropriate to the stylistic conventions and genre expectations of their chosen field of study.

Results: Acceptable Target Achievement: Exceeded; Ideal Target Achievement: Approaching

Action (Decision or Recommendation): Based on our findings that our graduates achieved an average of 4.70 on Measure Four with an achievement target of 3.5, we determined that although there is no action needed, we note that the outcomes for Measure 3 and 4 are the lowest scores for our students. This fact triggered our redesign of the required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better prepare students at an early point in their degree program so they can delve deeply into research and gain mastery in their chosen field of study and area of expertise by better conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant research.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Our findings for this assessment cycle indicate that on average, our students are achieving the acceptable targets and the arithmetic mean of each measure is approaching the ideal target achievement: a great indication that our program is accomplishing its goals. In response to the fact that Measures 3 and 4 are below the average scores of Measures 1 and 2, we are redesigning our required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to focus more explicitly on practice of research methods in each concentration and writing skills. We would also like to indicate that we are aware that our achievements are far above our Acceptable Target Achievements in each category and will be reassessing if those targets should be raised in future assessment years; because the 2016 cycle had 31 students—our highest

number of graduates by far—we are reluctant to adjust target numbers now in case the next year, which has far fewer graduating students, contains outliers which would significantly affect our assessment averages. Should we continue with high target values, however, we will reassess our target goals and our assessment measures to further raise expectations.

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STUDENT NAME_____ TERM OF
COMPLETION_____

Rubric for Extended, Research-Based Writing Project

Outcome	5	4	3	2
Employ **creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry**	Takes an innovative approach to the topic, builds from a well-defined argument and challenging thesis, and makes an original and significant contribution to the field of study	Takes an interesting approach to the topic, builds from a clearly-defined argument and clear thesis, and makes an original contribution to the field of study	Takes a reasoned approach to the topic, builds from an adequately-defined argument and thesis, and makes an acceptable contribution to the field of study	Takes a haphazard, if recognizable, approach to the topic, lacks a clear argument and defined thesis, and does not make a recognizable contribution to the field of study
Demonstrate **a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices**	Situates the project within a well-defined theoretical framework, provides a compelling rationale for that approach, and proceeds through clearly-related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies	Situates the project within a defined critical theoretical framework, provides a rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies	Situates the project within a particular theoretical framework, provides some rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies	Situates the project within a theoretical framework that is ill-defined, provides a limited rationale for that approach, and proceeds haphazardly through muddled methodologies
Conduct, analyze, and synthesize relevant research	Locates the project within a clearly-defined academic context through a thorough review of literature that presents a critical analysis and synthesis of	Locates the project within a defined academic context through a developed review of literature that presents a critical analysis and synthesis of significant and	Locates the project within an academic context through a review of literature that presents an analysis and synthesis of significant research and suggests how	Locates the project with some academic context through a undeveloped review of literature that lacks critical analysis or fails to discuss some significant research; only hints

	significant and relevant research and makes evident how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	relevant research and makes known how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	at how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation
Practice **sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions and genre expectations**	Follows conventions for academic written English and communicates essential information with clarity, precision, and coherence; evidences a strong sense of audience and tone; well-organized with appropriate transitions and logical flow for a cohesive argument; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide	Follows conventions for academic written English and communicates essential information clearly and coherently; evidences a sense of audience and tone; organized with appropriate transitions and logical flow for a cohesive argument; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide	Follows conventions for academic written English and communicates essential information coherently; evidences a sense of audience; organized with transitions and flow for a cohesive argument; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide	Fails to meet some conventions for academic written English so that communication is at times unclear, imprecise, or incoherent at times; lacks logical organization, transitions, and cohesion; incorrect formatting and citation according to selected style guide