

AC 2024-2025 Assessment

Program: Master's of Art in English (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, Languages, And Cultural Studies Mission: The Department of English, 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, 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; Composition and Rhetoric; and Creative Writing, as well as a Generalist option, 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 completion projects are due to the Graduate School Thesis 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, proposes 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 implements the action plan in the next assessment reporting cycle.

Student Learning Outcomes.

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

Measure 1.1 (Direct—Student Artifact).

Each of the six concentrations in the M.A. program in English requires a completion project. All students pursuing the standard singular degree of M.A. in English complete a Master's Capstone. All students pursuing the M.A. program in English as part of the Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree programs for an Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (820B and 820H) and a Master of Arts in English (529) complete a thesis, which fulfills both the M.A. in English completion requirement and the Louisiana Scholars' College requirement that students complete a thesis.

Master's Capstone: The Master's Capstone falls under the Graduate School's definition of the papers-in-lieu of thesis option. Students enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Master's Capstone. A fully approved Master's Capstone proposal must be on file in the Department prior to registration for capstone hours. The capstone consists of one research paper of journal-article length or the equivalent. It must be approved by the student's director and second reader and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. Capstone students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Masters Capstone, ENGL 6950, in which the capstone or papers-in-lieu of thesis is written and submitted.

Thesis: Students in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis for Accelerated BA-MA. 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 a two- to three-chapter thesis prior to

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graduation. Thesis students complete 24 hours of course work (8 classes) and 6 hours of thesis, ENGL 5980, in which the thesis is written and defended.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion project in both tracks 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 met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target of 8.4 was not met, as the ten students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.3. In the research-based writing for completion projects, students represented effective endeavor to think originally and critically, taking a reasonable approach to content and making some contribution to the disciplinary conversations. However, they did not demonstrate high proficiency in creative and critical thinking by expressly taking innovative approaches to content and making apt contributions to disciplinary conversations through their argumentation. The faculty revised the completion project curriculum, establishing a newly defined Master’s Capstone project for all students except those enrolled in a Louisiana Scholars’ College accelerated degree program, who complete a thesis consisting of two or three chapters. Additionally, a new assignment in ENGL 5800 strengthened proficiency in SLO 1 and prepared students for writing completion project abstracts. As a result, a plan of action was set by the faculty to support students in improving the implementation of innovative critical inquiry.

As a result of the analysis of AC 2023-2024, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Because of the establishment of two completion project tracks and the specification that the Master’s Capstone or thesis must build on content from a graduate English course, students implemented innovative approaches to their research, articulating and realizing their new critical contributions and original applications of theory. Practice writing abstracts in ENGL 5800 led students to articulate and realize their projects’ innovation in their respective concentrations. The sixteen students who completed a research-based completion project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.8.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through faculty participation in a professional development session centered on the development of students’ graduate-level writing. Improvement in students’ writing will serve all four SLOs; clarity, precision, and coherence of written academic discourse will enable students to convey more effectually the innovation of their critical methods. In a second supplementary professional development session, faculty will communicate and extend the ways current graduate courses participate in innovative methodologies and engage state-of-the-art theoretical approaches. The session will support faculty in developing continuity between the content of ENGL 5800’s learning

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outcomes regarding creative critical thinking and those of other courses across the degree program's curriculum.

On the rubric, the AC 2025-2026 target for this measure will be set at 8.9 to promote continuous improvement.

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

Measure 2.1 (Direct—Student Artifact)

Each of the six concentrations in the M.A. program in English requires a completion project. All students pursuing the standard singular degree of M.A. in English complete a Master's Capstone. All students pursuing the M.A. program in English as part of the Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree programs for an Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (820B and 820H) and a Master of Arts in English (529) complete a thesis, which fulfills both the M.A. in English completion requirement and the Louisiana Scholars' College requirement that students complete a thesis.

Master's Capstone: The Master's Capstone falls under the Graduate School's definition of the papers-in-lieu of thesis option. Students enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Master's Capstone. A fully approved Master's Capstone proposal must be on file in the Department prior to registration for capstone hours. The capstone consists of one research paper of journal-article length or the equivalent. It must be approved by the student's director and second reader and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. Capstone students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Masters Capstone, ENGL 6950, in which the capstone or papers-in-lieu of thesis is written and submitted.

Thesis: Students in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis for Accelerated BA-MA. 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 a two- to three-chapter 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 is written and defended.

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

All students will achieve an average of 8.3 or higher on the revised rubric for "Context": student "demonstrate[s] a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices."

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target of 8.3 was not met, as the ten students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.0.

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Although this score met the target for AC 2022-2023, it did not demonstrate continuous improvement. The faculty revised the completion project curriculum, establishing a newly defined Master's Capstone project for all students except those enrolled in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program, who complete a thesis consisting of two or three chapters. Additionally, a revised version of ENGL 5800's theory project assignment was reimplemented. A plan of action was set by the faculty to support students in improving SLO2, the demonstration of a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methods, and practices

As a result of the analysis of AC 2023-2025, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met. The sixteen students who completed a research-based completion project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.6. Because of the establishment of two completion project tracks and the specification that the Master's Capstone or thesis must build on content from a graduate English course, students in their completion projects not only applied but inhabited critical rationales that seamlessly interwove methods and theoretical approaches appropriate for publication. Reimplementation of the theory project in ENGL 5800 contributed to students' adept application of current and pertinent theoretical approaches in their completion projects.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through faculty participation in a professional development session centered on the development of students' graduate-level writing. Improvement in students' writing will serve all four SLOs; clarity, precision, and coherence of written academic discourse will enable students to convey their research's situation within and application of current theoretical and methodological approaches. In a second supplementary professional development session, faculty will communicate and extend the ways current graduate courses instruct students in pertinent critical assumptions and practices. The session will support faculty in developing continuity between the content of ENGL 5800's learning outcomes regarding theoretical and methodological contexts and those of other courses across the degree program's curriculum.

On the rubric, the AC 2025-2026 target for this measure will be set at 8.75 to promote continuous improvement.

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

Measure 3.1 (direct—student artifact)

Each of the six concentrations in the M.A. program in English requires a completion project. All students pursuing the standard singular degree of M.A. in English complete a Master's Capstone. All students pursuing the M.A. program in English as part of the Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree programs for an Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (820B and 820H) and a Master of Arts in English (529) complete a

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thesis, which fulfills both the M.A. in English completion requirement and the Louisiana Scholars' College requirement that students complete a thesis.

Master's Capstone: The Master's Capstone falls under the Graduate School's definition of the papers-in-lieu of thesis option. Students enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Master's Capstone. A fully approved Master's Capstone proposal must be on file in the Department prior to registration for capstone hours. The capstone consists of one research paper of journal-article length or the equivalent. It must be approved by the student's director and second reader and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. Capstone students complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Masters Capstone, ENGL 6950, in which the capstone or papers-in-lieu of thesis is written and submitted.

Thesis: Students in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis for Accelerated BA-MA. 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 a two- to three-chapter 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 is written and defended.

The attached rubric describes in detail the measurable outcomes for the degree completion project in both tracks 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 met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target of 8.4 was not met, as the ten students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.7. Students located their extended, research-based writing projects within distinct but not clearly defined academic contexts. Their literature reviews presented and synthesized relevant research with increased thoroughness and explicit specific articulation of how their project contributed to ongoing academic conversations. Changes were made to the final project in ENGL 5800: it required a new "Prospective Abstract" supplemented with an extensive literature review and a reflection. Also, the faculty revised the completion project curriculum, establishing a newly defined Master's Capstone project for all students except those enrolled in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program, who complete a thesis consisting of two or three chapters. Both tracks require students' completion projects to grow out of content or research initiated in previous graduate English coursework.

As a result of analysis of AC 2023-2024 data, in AC 2024-2025 the target was met. The sixteen students who completed a research-based completion project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.55. The establishment of two completion project tracks and the specification that the Master's Capstone or thesis must build on content from a graduate

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English course enabled students to initiate their completion projects with core knowledge of existing research from the earlier course. Likewise, the earlier course provided students with a stronger path for pursuing and synthesizing pertinent past research such that they located their projects within astutely conceived academic contexts. Furthermore, a reflection added to the final ENGL 5800 led students to transfer skills and apply metacognitive learning from the foundational class to articulate how their completion projects participate in timely and ongoing critical conversations.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through faculty participation in a professional development session centered on the development of students' graduate-level writing. Improvement in students' writing will serve all four SLOs; clarity, precision, and coherence of written academic discourse will enable students to convey succinctly and adeptly their understanding and synthesis of the existing literature applicable to their research. In a second supplementary professional development session, faculty will communicate and extend the ways current graduate courses serve students' ability to locate, understand, and synthesize existing research regarding their own research interests and endeavors. The session will support faculty in developing continuity between the content of ENGL 5800's learning outcomes regarding literature review and those of other courses across the degree program's curriculum.

On the rubric, the AC 2025-26 target for this measure will be set at 8.5 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.

Measure 4.1 (direct—student artifact)

Each of the six concentrations in the M.A. program in English requires a completion project. All students pursuing the standard singular degree of M.A. in English complete a Master's Capstone. All students pursuing the M.A. program in English as part of the Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree programs for an Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (820B and 820H) and a Master of Arts in English (529) complete a thesis, which fulfills both the M.A. in English completion requirement and the Louisiana Scholars' College requirement that students complete a thesis.

Master's Capstone: The Master's Capstone falls under the Graduate School's definition of the papers-in-lieu of thesis option. Students enroll in 3 hours of ENGL 6950: Master's Capstone. A fully approved Master's Capstone proposal must be on file in the Department prior to registration for capstone hours. The capstone consists of one research paper of journal-article length or the equivalent. It must be approved by the student's director and second reader and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. Capstone students

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complete 27 hours of course work (9 classes) and 3 hours of Masters Capstone, ENGL 6950, in which the capstone or papers-in-lieu of thesis is written and submitted.

Thesis: Students in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program enroll in 6 hours of ENGL 5980: Thesis for Accelerated BA-MA. 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 a two- to three-chapter 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 is written and defended.

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

All students will achieve an average of 8.75 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 2023-2024, the target of 8.7 was not met, as the ten students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.6. In their extended, research-based writing projects, students followed academic conventions and communicated essential information with reasonable if not polished clarity, precision, and coherence. Faculty designed and contributed to a new Revision Analysis assignment in ENGL 5800. The faculty also revised the completion project curriculum, establishing a newly defined Master's Capstone project for all students except those enrolled in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program, who complete a thesis consisting of two or three chapters. Both tracks require students' completion projects to be based in content or research from previous graduate English coursework, thereby providing models or previous practice writing in the appropriate discourse.

As a result of the analysis of AC 2023-2024, in AC 2024-2025, the target was not met. The sixteen students who completed a research-based completion project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.69. Importantly, this mean demonstrates improvement from AC 2023-2024. Students in their completion projects followed conventions for academic written English; however, their final revisions to completion project writing demonstrated an effective but not a refined understanding of audience and organization.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through faculty participation in a professional development session centered on the development of students' graduate-level writing. This improvement of students' writing will be the primary focus of faculty professional development in AC 2025-2026 because SLO4 was the only one that did not meet the target for AC 2024-2025. Additionally, instructional materials regarding revision and

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revision analysis will be augmented based on review and suggestions from the faculty. The revision analysis assignment will be revised to include an additional requirement regarding strategic scheduling for revision.

On the rubric, the AC 2025-26 target for this measure will be set at 8.75 to promote continuous improvement.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results.

- The faculty revised the completion project curriculum, establishing a newly defined Master's Capstone project for all students except those enrolled in a Louisiana Scholars' College accelerated degree program, who complete a thesis consisting of two or three chapters. Both tracks require students' completion projects to grow out of content or research initiated in previous graduate English coursework.
- Changes were made to the program's required course ENGL 5800 to provide students with skills necessary to write an effective prospective abstract, to establish and articulate the innovation of their critical thinking, to establish a highly effective theoretical framework for their research, to more fully capture and synthesize existing scholarship pertinent to their own research, and to revise their own research-based writing.

Plan of Action Moving Forward.

- Targets for all four SLOs in AC 2025-2026 have been set with consideration of the AC 2024-2025 averages and those of AC 2023-2024.
- A professional development session for faculty will support their effective teaching of graduate-level composition, including attention to how highly publishable writing also serves SLO1, SLO2, and SLO3.
- A supplementary professional development session will enable faculty to strengthen and extend the means by which they currently instruct students in creative argumentation, theoretical foundation, methodological design, and literature review. This session will increase continuity and synergy between ENGL 5800 and other courses in the curriculum with a focus on SLO1, SLO2, and SLO3.