

**Assessment Cycle
Academic Year 2016-2017**

Program: Bachelor's Degree in English
College: Arts and Sciences

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Northwestern State 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.

College of Arts and Sciences' Mission: The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequalled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Cultural Studies Mission Statement:
forthcoming

Undergraduate English Major Mission Statement: *forthcoming*

Purpose: *forthcoming*

Methodology: The assessor(s) will electronically collect student writing and assignment descriptions. The assessor(s) will determine which SLOs each assignment targets. Student writing will be assessed using the rubric appended to this document. On the rubric, the "targeted" column pertains to whether the SLO was explicitly targeted by the paper assignment, as determined by the assessor(s). On the rubric, the "evaluation" column is for the assessor's evaluation of how well the paper meets each SLO. The assessor(s) will mark "not

applicable” for any goal that is not relevant to the pertinent assignment. The assessor(s) will mark a writing sample “weak” if the goal was explicitly targeted by the assignment but does not appear in the paper. Faculty will meet during the fall 2017 on call week to discuss the results and determine the actions that need to be taken in response to the evaluation. Individual meetings will be held with faculty during on call week, if necessary. The Director of Undergraduate Studies, in consultation with faculty and the department advisory committee, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next period, and, where needed, curriculum and program changes.

Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1. Analysis and interpretation of evidence. Students in the English BA program will perform analysis and interpretation of evidence. In literature, film studies, and folklore papers, students will use textual evidence from close reading to defend an interpretive thesis, including locating the significance of chosen passages in the context of a larger work. For those students who take professional writing courses, this evidence may include primary materials such as websites, job ads, writing samples, etc. and the argument may be practical rather than interpretive.

Measure 1.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to analyze and interpret evidence from a variety of texts, broadly defined to include fiction, nonfiction, drama, film, new media, and primary texts including interviews and oral histories. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 2. Application of theory. Students in the English BA program will use theory to inform their analysis and argumentation. This theory may be literary, philosophical, cultural, psychological, political, economic, rhetorical, etc. in nature, and students will reference it explicitly in their writing, as, for example, an explicitly formulated Marxist analysis of the representation of class in a novel. This outcome does not pertain to general approaches that may have an unstated theoretical basis. For example, a focus on the passivity of female characters in a novel would not count for this outcome, unless feminist theory is an explicit topic of the paper as well.

Measure 2.1 (Direct – Knowledge/Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental

principles of theory as it relates to a given course. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 3. Application of established methodologies in the field. Students in the English BA program will use established methodologies of literary criticism. This outcome pertains to the use of the discourse of literary criticism, film studies, rhetorical theory, and cultural studies at a complex level, in regard to either: (a) specific approaches to interpretation that have established currency in the discipline, such as feminism and new historicism, but which do not involve the explicit theorization of learning outcome #2; and (b) terminology and techniques of formal analysis wielded in a more systematic and knowledgeable manner than the more general close reading that is covered by learning outcome #1.

Measure 3.1 (Direct – Knowledge/Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of the methodologies that apply to a given course. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 4. Engagement with social and literary history. Students in the English BA program will engage with social and literary history. While ideally we want students to have a sense of how social and literary history are reciprocal, this outcome may appear as engagement with *either* social history *or* literary history.

Measure 4.1 (Direct – Knowledge)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of social and/or literary history. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 5. Engagement with genre and form. Students in the English BA program will engage with genre and form. For literature, film, and folklore papers, this outcome requires explicit uses of the terminology or concepts of genre or form, or creative imitations of a specific genre or form. For those students who take creative writing and filmmaking courses, this outcome may appear as implicit engagement, in the creative work itself, with generic and formal conventions, as for example the general generic categories of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and screenwriting; the finer distinctions among, say, prose poem, flash fiction, short story, novella, and novel; specific poetic verse forms such as the sonnet, villanelle, or free verse; modes of fiction such as magical realism or psychological realism; or structural conventions such as linear

narrative or experimental narratives that employ a variety of discourses. This outcome also pertains to electronic media-specific composition and design skills, for example, composition for web pages, including effective paragraph length, linking, scannable prose, use of keywords, alignment; proximity, repetition, contrast and color, branding, ease of navigation, clarity and choice of visuals, font, and other multimedia.

Measure 5.1 (Direct – Knowledge)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental principles of genre and form in the context of a given course. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 6. Effective writing. Students in the English BA program will demonstrate effective writing. Students will demonstrate the general skills of college-level exposition developed to some degree of sophistication, as evident in the clarity, precision, fluidity, and aptness of sentence-level grammar, mechanics, and word choice; as well as in higher-level structural flexibility of sentences and paragraphs. For those students who take creative writing and courses, this outcome also involves the effective rendering of poetic lines, poetic stanzas, and dialogue. For students completing professional writing projects with a practical emphasis, and is a measure of the projects' rhetorical recognition of their specific audiences, including word choice, tone, selection of evidence, organization, and style (e.g., creative or traditional). This outcome also involves the production of active, concise, engaging prose in clearly delineated chunks in professional writing assignments.

Measure 6.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to compose effective writing. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 7. Establishment of sound, applicable arguments. Students in the English BA program will establish sound, applicable arguments. In literature, film studies, and folklore courses, students will clearly articulate a substantive thesis, for which they will provide a logically reasoned and organized defense. For those students who take professional writing courses, the argument may take various practical forms, such as recommendations for a client, a personal statement of qualifications, or carefully selected primary evidence for a portfolio. For such practical arguments, this outcome includes the feasibility of the argument.

Measure 7.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to craft a sound argument. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 8. Relevant use of sources. Students in the English BA program will use sources beyond the one of primary focus to establish relevant support for their argumentation. These sources may be assigned by an instructor specifically for an assignment, ones assigned earlier in the course, or ones the student knows from another course, in addition to those discovered through research.

Measure 8.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to identify and incorporate relevant sources. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 9. Independent, relevant research. Students in the English BA program will conduct independent research to establish relevant support for their argumentation. This outcome requires student-directed research, usually for assignments that explicitly require such research. For those students who take professional writing, folklore, and film courses, this outcome may appear in other forms than traditional library research, such as interviews, investigations of companies or individuals, or comparison of websites, films, or versions of folktales.

Measure 9.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to conduct independent, relevant research. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 10. Documentation of sources. Students in the English BA program will document resources accurately, consistently, and fully. This outcome extends to the documentation of all sources in any paper that requires documentation (that is, in more than just research

papers). For those students who take professional writing courses, this document extends to image credits and linking to websites; it does not necessarily involve a formal references page.

Measure 10.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to document sources in the citation style specified by the professor. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 11. Critical thinking. Students in the English BA program will explore and render insight in argument, reasoning, and methodology. For those students who take creative writing and filmmaking courses, this outcome requires an exploration of profound and complex themes, independent of creativity and originality.

Measure 11.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic ability to use critical thinking. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

SLO 12. Creativity and originality. Students in the English BA program will display creativity and originality in argument, reasoning, or methodology. For those students who take creative writing or filmmaking courses, this outcome pertains to creativity in a range of items including fresh concepts, unique ideas, novel approaches, unusual perspectives, surprising images, playful language usage, and innovative forms.

Measure 12.1 (Direct – Skill)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from all English courses taught that year will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using the standardized *Assessment Rubric for English Major Writing* (attached). The writing will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate creativity and originality. At least 80% of students sampled will score a 3 (competency) or higher on the evaluation.

Findings: Fall 2016

Student Learning Outcomes:		Number of Assignments Targeting SLO	Weak (1)	Weak to Competent (2)	Competent (3)	Competent to Strong (4)	Strong (5)
1	Analysis and interpretation of evidence	31	0	2	8	20	1
2	Application of theory	27	1	3	9	14	0
3	Application of established methodologies	31	1	1	9	17	3
4	Engagement with social and literary history	22	0	1	3	11	7
5	Engagement with genre and form	28	1	2	7	10	8
6	Effective writing	31	0	3	5	14	9
7	Establishment of sound, applicable arguments	31	0	4	11	6	10
8	Relevant use of sources	24	3	6	2	5	8
9	Independent, relevant research	21	1	4	6	5	5
10	Documentation of sources	22	4	3	5	9	1
11	Critical Thinking	31	0	1	7	7	16
12	Creativity and originality	0	0	0	0	0	0

Student Learning Outcomes:		Number of Assignments Assessed	Number of Students Scoring Competent (3) or Higher	Percentage of Students Scoring Competent (3) or Higher
1	Analysis and interpretation of evidence	31	29	94
2	Application of theory	27	23	85
3	Application of established methodologies	31	29	94
4	Engagement with social and literary history	22	21	95
5	Engagement with genre and form	28	25	89
6	Effective writing	31	28	90
7	Establishment of sound, applicable arguments	31	27	87
8	Relevant use of sources	24	15	63
9	Independent, relevant research	21	16	76
10	Documentation of sources	22	15	68
11	Critical Thinking	31	30	97
12	Creativity and originality	0	0	0

Findings: Spring 2017

Student Learning Outcomes:		Number of Assignments Targeting SLO	Weak (1)	Weak to Competent (2)	Competent (3)	Competent to Strong (4)	Strong (5)
1	Analysis and interpretation of evidence	12	0	5	6	6	17
2	Application of theory	7	3	2	3	3	9
3	Application of established methodologies	6	1	1	4	2	11
4	Engagement with social and literary history	3	1	0	1	1	8
5	Engagement with genre and form	12	3	3	6	2	22
6	Effective writing	16	1	8	10	12	17
7	Establishment of sound, applicable arguments	11	2	8	6	6	10
8	Relevant use of sources	12	5	6	4	6	11
9	Independent, relevant research	8	4	4	1	2	5
10	Documentation of sources	13	11	9	5	5	5
11	Critical Thinking	15	5	5	9	7	17
12	Creativity and originality	5	2	0	4	2	7

Student Learning Outcomes:		Number of Assignments Assessed	Number of Students Scoring Competent (3) or Higher	Percentage of Students Scoring Competent (3) or Higher
1	Analysis and interpretation of evidence	34	29	85
2	Application of theory	20	15	75
3	Application of established methodologies	19	17	89
4	Engagement with social and literary history	11	10	91
5	Engagement with genre and form	36	30	83
6	Effective writing	48	39	81
7	Establishment of sound, applicable arguments	32	22	69
8	Relevant use of sources	32	22	69
9	Independent, relevant research	16	8	50
10	Documentation of sources	35	15	43
11	Critical Thinking	43	33	77
12	Creativity and originality	15	13	87

Analysis

These 12 SLOs and the accompanying rubric were only implemented this academic year; therefore, we do not have any basis for comparison with past assessments. Our stated goal was that 80% of our majors would score a 3 or higher, denoting competency, in each SLO targeted in their coursework.

For fall 2016, we met the 80% goal for SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11. We fell short of that goal for SLOs 8, 9, and 10. [For SLO 12, we did not have any results because none of the assignments targeted creativity and originality.] These findings indicate a distinct weakness in our students' ability to establish arguments that are applicable to their assignments, and in their research and citation skills. It was also interesting to discover that fewer assignments under assessment related to SLOs 4, 9, or 12, denoting areas for possible enhancement in our coursework.

For spring 2017, we met that goal for SLOs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 12. We fell short of that goal for SLOs 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. These findings were surprising in that they indicate a distinct weakness in our students' ability to establish arguments that are applicable to their assignments, and in their research and citation skills. It was also interesting to discover that very few of the assignments under assessment related to SLOs 4, 9, or 15, denoting areas for possible enhancement in our coursework.

Decision

As a department, we will include more instruction on research skills. Faculty will be encouraged to work with the instructional librarian at the Watson Library to develop assignments about evaluating sources, doing scholarly research, and the importance of proper citation.

While we work to increase our students' research skills, we will not neglect the basics of reading comprehension and scholarly inquiry—on both a scholarly and practical level. Faculty will revise their assignment descriptions to make instructions and expectations more explicit. They will work to foster open classroom and office environments so that students will feel comfortable asking whether or not their idea for a thesis statement or choice of sources is relevant to the assignment.

Faculty will be encouraged to develop assignments that ask students to engage with social and literary history, that require independent research, and that emphasize originality in scholarly thought.

These are new SLOs for the 2016-2017 academic year, and they were not developed until the Spring 2017 semester, so the EFLCS faculty was not able to actively target these outcomes. We will hold a department workshop on the SLOs during the faculty on-call week before the fall 2017 semester begins. The meeting will allow us to do a norming session on the SLOs so that we are consistently scoring each assignment the same way. Another factor worth noting is that only two faculty members, with one focusing on each half of the semester, assessed student work. In the future, assessment will be done by committee, and at least three faculty members will assess each piece of writing in order to standardize grading.

Summary

While we are unable to compare these results to past data, our new SLOs and assessment rubric have revealed valuable information about our program. We will continue to work toward greater student competency in crafting appropriate arguments and performing scholarly research. Faculty will adapt existing assignments and develop new ones to target our students' educational needs and our own pedagogical goals.