

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Program: English Master's Program

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: J. Ereck Jarvis

Date: 31 May 2018

Approved by: Greg Handel

Date: 12 June 2018

Northwestern State 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:

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

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

experiences, the Graduate Program provides invaluable versatility in a rapidly changing world.

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 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 Outcomes:

SLO 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.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

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 3.5 or higher on the rubric for critical inquiry: “[t]akes 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.”

Findings for Measure 1: Critical Inquiry

AY 2017-2018: Target was met, and cohort achieved an arithmetic mean score of 4.40 on the rubric for critical inquiry.

Analysis: In AY 2016-2017, the target was met, as the 31 students who completed their extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 4.88 on the rubric for employment of creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry. This was the highest mean score of those for our four measures. In pursuit of ongoing improvement, we identified potential for students to better develop their authorial voices as a means to nurture “innovative” rather than “interesting” approaches to their topics. Cultivating authorial voice also promotes an improvement from “original” to “original and significant” regarding their projects’ contributions to the field of study. Thus, to further assist students in moving from “interesting” to “innovative” approaches to their topics and from “original” to “original and significant” taking a reasoned approach, adequately argued regarding their chosen topic. The required course English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research was redesigned in response to AY 2016-2017 findings for all four measures testing SLOs. To support increased development of students’ authorial voices, the revised iteration of English 5800 required students to develop research topics driven by their individual academic interests and individual responses to assigned readings.

In AY 2017-2018, the target continued to be met, as the 21 students who completed their extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 4.40 on the rubric for employment of creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry. Nevertheless, the mean score for Measure 1, which represented the highest score of our four measures in AY2016-2017, was the lowest in AY 2017-2018. Students benefited from increased attention to authorial voice; however, further action can be taken to strengthen students’ development of critical inquiry within the curriculum of English 5800, particularly through more use of models of critical inquiry.

The fact that the mean score for Measure 1 shows the most decline from AY 2016-2017 to AY 2017-2018 provides evidence that it should receive faculty-wide attention. In continuously striving to improve and to encourage students to define and take innovative approaches to critical inquiry, graduate faculty will participate in professional training regarding Measure 1.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Because the findings demonstrate that our program met the target for SLO1 for both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, we will establish a more rigorous target to maximize the benefit of assessment in AY 2018-2019.

Decision: Consistent findings from both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 provide evidence that the M.A. program in English successfully fulfills SLO 1, with average scores of 4.88 and 4.40 respectively. In AY 2017-2018, increased attention to authorial voice in English 5800 improved students' practice of critical inquiry. Nevertheless, comparison of results from the past two years in conjunction with our drive for continuous improvement demonstrates that further actions should be taken to sustain and advance students' understanding and practice of innovative and significant critical inquiry. English 5800 curriculum will be further refined: in addition to requiring students to develop research topics driven by individual academic interests and individual responses, the course will require students to identify, discuss, and reflect upon models of innovative critical inquiry through analyses of exemplary works of scholarship in their respective concentrations. Reading and analyses of these models will engage students more deeply and concretely with SLO 1. Furthermore, graduate faculty will participate in professional training that directs them regarding how to integrate increased practice and evaluation of critical inquiry in both course and assignment design. Finally, we will raise the target for this measure in AY2018-19 from 3.5 to 4.5.

SLO 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.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

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 3.5 or higher on the rubric: “[s]ituates the project within a particular theoretical framework, provides some rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies.”

Findings for Measure 2: Critical Methodologies and Practices

AY 2017-2018: Target was met, and cohort achieved an arithmetic mean score of 4.45 on the rubric for critical methodologies and practices.

Analysis: In AY 2016-2017, the target was met, as 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. Based on this evidence, we determined that we should continue to improve how students 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 redesigned the required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better encourage students to delve deeply into research methods within their chosen concentrations.

In AY 2017-2018, the target continued to be met, as the 21 students who completed their extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 4.45 on the rubric for employment of creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry. The decline from the mean score of 4.82 in AY 2016-2017 provides evidence that further action can be taken to strengthen students’ development of critical inquiry. In particular, English 5800 should be revised to balance the increased focus on concentration-specific research methods with introduction to theoretical frameworks that are applicable within all concentrations. The changes to English 5800’s curriculum in AY 2017-18 rightfully shifted the course’s focus away from literary theory, which does not apply to all concentrations. However, the benefits of this change can be supplemented with introduction of theoretical frameworks appropriate to all concentrations and with instruction regarding the different operations and uses of secondary and theoretical research sources.

Because the findings demonstrate that our program met the target for SLO2 for both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, we will establish a more rigorous target to maximize the benefit of assessment in in AY 2018-2019.

Decision: Consistent findings from both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 provide evidence that the M.A. program in English successfully fulfills SLO 2, with average scores of 4.82 and 4.45 respectively. During AY 2017-2018, each student studied research methods specific to their concentration. Analysis of results from the last two years in conjunction with our drive for continuous improvement demonstrates that further actions will be taken to sustain and advance students’ understanding and

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

engagement in critical methodologies and practices. In addition to differentiating between methods and practices appropriate to different concentrations, English 5800 curriculum will integrate a revised introduction to theoretical frameworks and their particular implementation within specific concentrations. Furthermore, the course will highlight the distinctions between secondary and theoretical research sources, requiring students to identify and analyze their differences. Finally, we will raise the target for this measure in AY2018-19 from 3.5 to 4.5.

SLO 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.

All students will achieve an average of 3.5 or higher on the rubric: “[l]ocates 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.”

Findings for Measure 3: Relevant Research

AY 2017-2018: Target was met, and cohort achieved an arithmetic mean score of 4.5 on the rubric for critical methodologies and practices.

Findings for Measure 3: Relevant Research

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Analysis: In AY 2016-2017, the target was met, as 31 students completed their extended, research-based writing project in the 2016 cycle with an arithmetic mean of 4.70 on the rubric for relevant research. The outcomes for Measure 3 and 4 were the lowest scores for our students, and this triggered our redesign, in AY 2017-2018, 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.

In AY 2017-18, the target continued to be met, as the 21 students who completed their extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 4.50. Analysis of these findings demonstrates the relative success in our redesign of English 5800 as measures 3 and 4 received the highest mean scores in AY 2017-18. In continuously striving to improve, the faculty agreed that additional refinement to English 5800: students should be required to reflect upon the epistemological import of relevant research by applying additional terminology and writing about relevant research in these terms. This refinement will enable students to more clearly define and highlight both the scholarly context of their research and their contributions to that ongoing conversation.

Because the findings demonstrate that our program met the target for SLO3 for both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, we will establish a more rigorous target to maximize the benefit of assessment in AY 2018-2019.

Decision: Consistent findings from both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 provide evidence that the M.A. program in English successfully fulfills SLO 3, with average scores of 4.70 and 4.50 respectively. IN AY 2017-2018, revision of English 5800 ensured students studied research methods specific to their respective concentrations. Analysis of results from the last two academic years in conjunction with our drive for continuous improvement demonstrates, first, the relative success of our new English 5800 curriculum and, second, the benefit to further refine this curriculum with regard to Measure 3. In our required course, students will write responses to model literature reviews as well as their own creation of a literature review, applying Kenneth Burke's metaphor of conversational epistemology. These assignments will provide students with an additional means of conceptualizing their use of relevant research and will enable them to reflect upon the integral importance of participating in an ongoing research-based conversation. Finally, we will raise the target for this measure in AY2018-19 from 3.5 to 4.75.

SLO 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:

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

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 3.5 or higher on the rubric: “[f]ollows 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.”

Findings for Measure 4: Writing Skills

AY 2017-2018: Target was met, and cohort achieved an arithmetic mean score of 4.66 on the rubric for writing skills.

Analysis: In AY 2016-2017, the target was met, as 31 students completed their extended, research-based writing project in the 2016 cycle with an arithmetic mean of 4.70 on the rubric for writing skills. The findings for Measure 3 and 4 were the lowest scores for our students, and therefore we altered the curriculum of our program's required course, English 5800: Bibliography and Literary Research, to better prepare students at an early point in their degree program to not only delve deeply into research in their chosen field of study but also gain mastery of communicating their research in their chosen field of study and area of expertise by better conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant research in effective academic style.

In AY 2017-18, the target continued to be met, as the 21 students who completed their extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 4.66. Analysis of these findings demonstrates the relative success in our redesign of English 5800 as measures 3 and 4 received the highest mean scores in AY 2017-18. In continuously striving to improve, the faculty agreed that additional refinement to English 5800: students should be required to conduct comparative analyses of genre to better understand the writing-based standards of their respective concentrations.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Because the findings demonstrate that our program met the target for SLO4 for both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, we will establish a more rigorous target to maximize the benefit of assessment in in AY 2018-2019.

Decision: Consistent findings from both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 provide evidence that the M.A. program in English successfully fulfills SLO 4, with average scores of 4.70 and 4.66 respectively. In AY 2017-18, revision of English 5800 to improve students' writing of skills with regard to academic style. Analysis of results from the previous two academic years in conjunction with our drive for continuous improvement demonstrates, first, the relative success of our new English 5800 curriculum and, second, the benefit of further refining this curriculum with regard to Measure 4. In our required course, students will be required to identify and articulate genre-specific conventions of writing in their respective concentration and at least one other concentration whose standards, for example, of structure, evidence, and voice embody key differences. This additional step will enable students to better grasp the discipline-specific situation of writing skills as well as the importance of academic style and effective writing more generally. Finally, we will raise the target for this measure in AY2018-19 from 3.5 to 4.75.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.

- Student achievement of targets for Measures 1 – 4 in AY 2017-2018 demonstrates the persistent success of the program regarding our established SLOs.
- Revision to our program's required course English 5800 shows evidence of initial success, particularly regarding the findings for Measures 3 and 4, which received the lowest scores in AY 2016-2017 and the highest scores in AY 2017-2018.
- Comparison of AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 demonstrates that curricular changes to English 5800 support students in delving more deeply into research and gaining mastery in academic style and their chosen field of study and area of expertise by better conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant research.

Plan of action moving forward

Our dedication to persistent improvement as well as noteworthy decline in median scores for Measures 1 and 2 have led faculty to the following curricular refinements to our program's required course English 5800:

- The course will require students to identify, discuss, and reflect upon models of innovative critical inquiry through analyses of exemplary works of scholarship in their respective concentrations.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

- While continuing to differentiate between methods and practices appropriate to specific concentrations, the course will integrate a revised introduction to theoretical frameworks and their particular implementation within specific concentrations.
- The course will highlight the distinctions between secondary and theoretical research sources, requiring students to identify and analyze their differences.
- Students will write responses to model literature reviews as well as their own creation of a literature review, applying Kenneth Burke's metaphor of conversational epistemology in order to provide an additional means of conceptualizing their use of relevant research and to ensure the transfer of participating in ongoing research-based conversations in their subsequent coursework and related research.
- Students will be required to identify and articulate genre-specific conventions of writing in their respective concentration and at least one other concentration, to better grasp the discipline-specific situation of writing skills as well as the importance of effective writing more generally.

Because the mean score for Measure 1 showed the greatest decline, graduate faculty also will participate in professional training that directs them to integrate increased practice and more effective evaluation of critical inquiry in both course and assignment design.

Expected increase in graduate faculty by two in AY 2018-2019 will not only enable expansion of our current course offerings, particularly in the concentration of Writing and Linguistics, but it will increase the research-based expertise of faculty in technical writing and digital studies courses. Under new administrative leadership, the program also anticipates more regular meetings of graduate faculty which will enable additional discussion of and attention to our measures, particularly regarding how individual courses address our SLOs and how our program might reassess our target goals to further raise expectations and promote evidence of improvement. Finally, because findings demonstrate that our program met the targets for all SLOs in both AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, we will establish more rigorous targets to maximize the benefit of assessment in the future.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

STUDENT NAME _____ **TERM OF COMPLETION** _____

Rubric for Extended, Research-Based Writing Project

Outcome	5	4	3	2	1
Employ creative thinking, innovation, & 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	Fails to take a recognizable approach to an ill-defined topic, makes no recognizable argument, and does not make a recognizable contribution to the field of study
Demonstrate a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, & 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	Lacks a recognizable theoretical framework and proceeds without identifiable methodology
Conduct, analyze, & synthesize relevant research	Locates the project within a clearly-defined academic context through a thorough review of literature that	Locates the project within a defined academic context through a developed review of literature that presents a	Locates the project within an academic context through a review of literature that presents an analysis and synthesis of	Locates the project with some academic context through an undeveloped review of literature that lacks critical	Little or no academic context due to a lack of or extremely limited literature review that lacks analysis, fails to

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

	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	critical analysis and synthesis of significant and relevant research and makes known how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	significant research and suggests how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	analysis or fails to discuss some significant research; only hints at how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation	address significant research, and draws little connection between the project and the ongoing academic conversation
Practice sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions & 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	Fails to meet conventions for academic written English so that communication is unclear, imprecise, or incoherent at times; lacks logical organization and cohesion; incorrect formatting and citation according to selected style guide