

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

English Master's Program

College: Arts and Sciences

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

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

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

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

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

Methodology:

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

Student Learning Outcome

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

Measure 1.1 (Direct—Student Artifact)

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

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

Papers-in-lieu 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.

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

All students will achieve an average of 8.25 or higher on the revised rubric for “Ideas”: student “employ[s] creative thinking, innovation, and critical inquiry.”

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-20, the target of 9.0 was not met. Based on the results from AC 2019-2020, curricular revisions were made to ENGL 5800. Furthermore, the AC 2020-21 target for this measure was set at 8.25.

As a result, in AC 2020-21, the target was met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.27.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022 the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement first through conducting a professional development session for faculty. Furthermore, the curriculum of ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program, will be revised to further support both SLO1 and SLO2. The class will add a new reading by Tressie McMillan Cottom and an existing major assignment will be revised such that students are required to implement Tressie McMillan Cottom’s call for and modelling of research methods that include reading around subjects and generating adjacent key words. This addition to the course’s curriculum integrates further capacity for creative and innovative development into the processes that enable students to develop and establish research-based writing.

On the rubric, the AC 2021-22 target for this measure will be set at 8.45 in order 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 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

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

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 9.0 or higher on the revised rubric for "Context": student "demonstrate[s] a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices."

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target of 9.0 was not met. Based on the AC 2019-2020 results, the ENGL 5800 curriculum was revised and the target for this measure was set at 9.0.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021, the target the target was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.73.

The failure to meet the established goal demonstrated, in part, the effective revision to the rubric for AC 2019-20. For the AC 2019-20 assessment, the rubric was rewritten to feature more specific evaluative language and thereby increase the rigor and uniformity of evaluation; additionally, the former 5-point scale was rendered as a 10-points to capture greater nuance in the assessment of SLOs.

It is important to recognize the ways in which the pandemic limited access to library resources, including significant interruption of Interlibrary Loan services which are integral to graduate-level research in English. Perhaps more noteworthy, social distancing measures created challenges, some of which were prohibitive, for conducting qualitative research, particularly approaches that draw on observation, interview, and collection of data via paper and other objects handled by participants. These limitations should be understood as legitimate factors affecting the ways in which students could pursue research.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through a professional development session that speaks to the variety of critical assumptions, methods, and practices applicable to the four discipline-specific concentrations. Because students within a specific concentration often enroll in English graduate electives in other concentrations and because the program's fifth concentration, "Generalist," is required to complete electives from each of the other four

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

concentrations, the session will direct professors not only to address more explicitly and thoroughly critical assumptions and methods applicable to individual courses and disciplines but also the ways in which these relate to and differ from research methods integral to other concentrations.

The curriculum of ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program, will be revised in two ways. First, elements of the “Journal Project” will be re-written to focus students’ analysis and reflection on the methods and critical assumptions specific to the academic journal they work with for the assignment. Second, to support both SLO1 and SLO2, the class will add a new reading by Tressie McMillan Cottom and an existing major assignment will be revised such that students are required to implement Tressie McMillan Cottom’s call for and modelling of research methods that include reading around subjects and generating adjacent key words in line with development of theoretical and category-based methods of developing research-based analyses and arguments applicable to all concentrations in the English graduate program.

On the rubric, the AC 2021-2022 target for this measure will be set at 8.25 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 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.

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

All students will achieve an average of 8.5 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 not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target of 9.25 was not met. Based on the results from AC 20119-2020, new frameworks to support students’ development of proposals and research design for completion projects were developed.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021, the target was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 7.93. Although the target was not met, the score of 7.93 does represent improvement from the arithmetic mean of 7.75 in AC 2019-20. This improvement is noteworthy because almost twice as many students completed extended, research-based writing projects in AC 2020-21 (15 students) compared to AC 2019-20 (8 students).

It is important to recognize the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic limited access to library resources, perhaps most significantly through the interruption of Interlibrary Loan services which are integral to graduate-level research in English.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement first through rescheduling and conducting a professional development session. The session will highlight the assertion in Eric Hayot’s *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* that time constraints regarding graduate seminar papers limit the extent to which students can practice a substantive review of extant scholarship. Faculty will be encouraged to consider how to be explicit about these limitations as well as development of assignments and course content that can address these limitations.

Additionally, readings used to teach literature review will be changed in ENGL 5800, the course required for all students in the English MA program. The replacement of previously assigned content with more effective resources represents ongoing development of this component of ENGL.

On the rubric, the AC 2021-22 target for this measure will be set at 8.25 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)

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

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

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

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

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

All students will achieve an average of 8.75 or higher on the revised rubric for "Form": student "practice[s] sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions and genre expectations."

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-20, the target of 9.5 was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, revisions were made to the ENGL 5800 curriculum, particularly its grading and evaluation of major assignments. The AC 2020-2021 target for this measure was set at 8.75.

As a result, in AC 2020-21, the target was not met, as the fifteen students who completed an extended, research-based writing project scored an arithmetic mean of 8.4. Although the target was not met, the score of 8.4 does represent improvement from the arithmetic mean of 8.25 in AC 2019-2020. This improvement is noteworthy because almost twice as many students completed extended, research-based writing projects in AC 2020-21 (15 students) compared to AC 2019-20 (8 students).

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the Graduate Program in English will drive continuous improvement through revision to the curriculum of ENGL 5800, which is completed by all students in the program. Reflective writing prompts in the course will be amended such that students are directed to focus on lessons of advanced composition

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

they gain from reading assigned scholarly publications. Grading criteria will be revised to highlight further the writing component of each major assignment, with language that directs students in improvement of their academic writing.

On the rubric, the AC 2021-22 target for this measure will be set at 8.65 to promote continuous improvement.

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

- Revisions to ENGL 5800 implemented.
- New frameworks to support students' development of proposals and research design for completion projects were developed.
- Measure targets were set to more realistic goals.

Plan of Action Moving Forward.

- In the program's required course ENGL 5800,
 - Add new reading and revise a related existing major assignment to provide students with models for and practice of creative thinking, original analysis, and theoretical and category-based methods of developing research-based analyses.
 - Revise an existing assignment such that students must articulate the methods and critical assumptions specific to a particular scholarly journal.
 - Replace past readings with improved resources to better instruct students in development of literature reviews.
 - Require students to incorporate into reflective writing the identification and description of knowledge gained about academic composition gained from reading published academic writing.
 - Alter grading rubrics to communicate with students regarding their strengths and areas for development regarding academic writing.
- Professional development sessions for graduate faculty will:
 - - Offer strategies for teaching innovative and creative research, particularly through the design of assignments and content of feedback.

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

- Demonstrate means of including in individual assignments components that require students to engage with appropriate critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices.
- Mark the variety of methodologies and critical assumptions applicable within the program's multiple concentrations such that professors will explain the similarities and differences of these discipline-oriented conventions to provide students with explicit means of connecting methods and disciplines.
- Convey the difficulty of effective literature review in standard seminar papers and, in turn, share means of teaching core concepts and skills related to literature review through other individual assignments.

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

STUDENT NAME _____

TERM OF COMPLETION _____

Rubric for Extended, Research-Based Writing Project

In paired scores such as “9-8,” the lower score should be awarded if the criteria are almost but not fully met.

| Outcome | 10 | 9 - 8 | 7 - 6 | 5 - 4 | 3 - 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>1. Ideas: Employ creative thinking, innovation, & critical inquiry</p> <p>1 </p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> | <p>Represents innovation and originality suitable for peer-review and publication; takes innovative approach to content; builds from compelling, sophisticated argument or position; contributes significantly to discipline</p> | <p>Represents scholarly proficiency in creative and critical thinking, takes an innovative and original approach to content, builds from a well-defined and complex argument or position, and contributes aptly to discipline</p> | <p>Represents effective endeavor to think creatively/originally and critically; takes a reasonable approach to content, builds from a defined argument or position, and makes a contribution to discipline</p> | <p>Represents some awareness of creative/original and critical thinking; takes a plausible approach to content, builds from an adequately-defined and plausible argument or position, and makes some—possibly implicit—contribution to discipline</p> | <p>Represents some misunderstanding of critical and creative/original thinking; takes recognizable if flawed or derivative approach to content; builds from an inconsistent argument or position; and does not make a recognizable contribution to discipline</p> | <p>Represents lack of critical and creative thinking; takes an erroneous or unoriginal approach to ill-defined content, builds contradictory or irre recognizable argument or position, and makes no contribution to discipline</p> |
| <p>2. Context: Demonstrate a command of pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies & practices</p> <p>1 </p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> | <p>Adeptly situates the project in a theoretical framework in a manner that firmly meets or exceeds publishable & professional standards, authoritatively articulating and inhabiting a rationale for the approach, and proceeding through seamlessly interwoven literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies</p> | <p>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</p> | <p>Situates the project within a defined critical theoretical framework, provides a rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies</p> | <p>Situates the project within a particular theoretical framework, provides some rationale for that approach, and proceeds through related literary, critical, or theoretical methodologies</p> | <p>Situates the project within a theoretical framework that is ill-defined, provides a limited rationale for that approach, and proceeds haphazardly through muddled methodologies</p> | <p>Lacks a recognizable theoretical framework and proceeds without identifiable methodology</p> |

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| <p>3. Research/Dis-courses: Conduct, analyze, synthesize, contextualize relevant research</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>Locates the project in a pioneering or astutely conceived academic context through review of literature that meets the standards for peer-review publication 1) by engaging authoritatively and comprehensively in application, demonstration, analysis, and synthesis of relevant research and 2) by proving the project alters a timely & ongoing academic conversation Quantitatively, it draws thoughtfully and thoroughly but not derivatively on an exceptional number of timely sources and exceptional set of evidence or data.</p> | <p>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 Quantitatively, it draws compellingly on an apt number of appropriate and thoughtfully selected sources and a compelling set of evidence or data.</p> | <p>Locates the project within a defined academic context through a developed review of literature that presents a critical analysis and synthesis of significant and relevant research and makes known how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation Quantitatively, it draws effectively on a reasonable number of sources and a reasonable set of evidence or data.</p> | <p>Locates the project within an academic context through a review of literature that presents an analysis and synthesis of significant research and suggests how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation Quantitatively, it draws on a plausible number of sources and a plausible set of evidence or data.</p> | <p>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 at how the project fits into and contributes to an ongoing academic conversation Quantitatively, it refers some but not an adequate number of sources and some though not adequate data.</p> | <p>Little or no academic context due to a lack of or extremely limited literature review that lacks analysis, fails to address significant research, and draws little connection between the project and the ongoing academic conversation Quantitatively, it fails to refer effectively to sources, evidence, or data.</p> |
| <p>4. Form: Practice sophisticated writing skills appropriate to stylistic conventions & genre expectations</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>Exemplifies conventions for academic written English as modeled by the clarity, precision, and coherence of peer-reviewed publications; exemplifies comprehension and management of audience and tone; professionally organized with elegant transitions and nimble logic invigorating a compelling argument or stance; perfect formatting and citation in line with publication</p> | <p>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 or stance; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide</p> | <p>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 or stance; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide</p> | <p>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 or stance; correct formatting and citation according to selected style guide</p> | <p>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</p> | <p>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</p> |