

2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: Humanities

Department: English

Option: Literature

Committee Chair: Nathaniel Mills

Assessment liaison: RosaMaria Chacon

- 1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s) (optional).** Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

The committee overseeing the department's Literature Option assessed Common Undergraduate Student Learning Outcome (SLO) #3: "Students will demonstrate knowledge of creative, literary, linguistic, and/or rhetorical theories." The committee drafted a Common Rubric, subsequently approved and adopted by the department, for the evaluation of this SLO. This rubric specifies criteria for 5 different categories (ranging from "excellent" to "not demonstrated"). To assess the outcome, the committee selected 9 student essays, at random, from a Fall 2012 section of the Option's Capstone Course, English 495: Senior Seminar in English. Each committee member read all 9 essays individually, and assigned each a score based on the criteria specified in the assessment rubric. The committee then compiled the results and discussed the significance of these results.

- 2. Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

During the previous year (2011-2012), our assessment activities and discussions were often conducted with all department faculty during monthly department meetings. Unfortunately, the English Department found this method to be rather unwieldy and unmanageable. This is particularly true since the English Department has five options with an additional graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition. This has resulted in 6 different 5-year plans, which can be confusing and unwieldy for all (whole) department discussions.

Therefore, this year (2012-2013), the English Department tried something different. At the beginning of each semester, the department chair met with each option head and the assessment coordinator (liaison) to discuss assessment plans and tasks. After these meetings, each option head met with their committees and conducted assessment. These 6 committees included 28 different faculty members (out of a total of 32 full time faculty). Thus, almost all English Department faculty were directly involved in assessment. Doing our assessment in this manner enabled us to conduct assessment more effectively in a focused effort.

In addition, the English department did conduct (in October 2012) one all faculty discussion and consensus re the adoption of a new rubric for assessment of Common Undergraduate SLO #3: Students will demonstrate knowledge of creative, literary, linguistic, and/or rhetorical theories. This SLO and rubric are shared by several options.

- 3. Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

Common Undergraduate SLO #3: "Students will demonstrate knowledge of creative, literary, linguistic, and/or rhetorical theories"

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking
- Written Communication

3c. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO? A department-approved rubric that described and quantified different levels of student achievement or response to the SLO: 5 (excellent), 4 (more than satisfactory), 3 (satisfactory), 2 (less than satisfactory), 1 (not demonstrated).

3d. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

This SLO was assessed on the basis of culminating projects (final papers) from the Literature Option's capstone course (English 495). In order to determine if students were demonstrating knowledge of theoretical paradigms upon completion of the Literature Option, a random set of 9 student essays from English 495 was assessed. These essays were 10-page research papers drafted over the course of the semester, an extended format that made them substantial resources for the assessment of cumulative student knowledge of the theories pertinent to literary study.

3e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

The assessment yielded 6 scores per essay, as each of the 6 committee members evaluated the set of 9 essays individually. The statistical result of the assessment is as follows, with each essay numbered 1-10, and each committee member labeled A-F. Included are the average, median, and mode scores for each essay.

ESSAY	A	B	C	D	E	F	AVERAGE SCORE	MEDIAN SCORE
Essay #1	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3
Essay #2	4	5	3	5	4	3	4	4
Essay #3	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.66	5
Essay #4	2	2	3	3	4	2	2.66	2.5
Essay #5	2	4	3	3	4	2	3	3
Essay #6	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.5	3.5
Essay #7	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.33	3
Essay #8	4	2	3	2	3	3	2.83	3
Essay #9	2	5	4	3	5	3	3.66	3.5

Based on our collective results, the committee decided that students were meeting this SLO at a more than satisfactory level. Of the 9 sample essays, 7 received scores of satisfactory or higher. The committee also noted that the relative consistency between average and median scores indicated a general consensus, across each member's individual assessments, as to the quality of each essay. The results indicate that students completing the Option possess a more than satisfactory grasp of theories appropriate to the discipline.

3f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

The literature committee engaged in a thorough and extended discussion of the results, addressing the question of what steps might (or should) be taken in light of our findings.

While the committee decided in light of very favorable assessment results, that no immediate action needs to be taken in response to the assessment, the committee discussed the possibility of using another course—English 436: Major Critical Theories—to assess this SLO. As an introduction to literary theory, English 436 might be assessed either as an appropriate complement to the capstone 495, or as a more effective substitute for it, in order to gauge student knowledge of theory. However, the committee noted that English 436 would be a less-than-perfect choice for inclusion in a longitudinal assessment of this SLO. English 436 is generally the students' first encounter with theory and, given the difficulty of the subject matter, many students struggle. Often, students completing 436 have only begun to grapple with literary theory and to develop the skills needed to demonstrate knowledge of it. By the time students complete the coursework for the literature option, English 495 provides a more appropriate venue for assessing how much knowledge of theory they have acquired from English 436 and other courses. It also provides an appropriate venue for how well they have learned to demonstrate this knowledge in their work.

The committee did feel that the results pointed to the need for the department to re-address the role theory plays in the Literature Option. Some committee members pointed out a discrepancy between having an SLO devoted to theory, but only one required course specifically devoted to theory—English 436—in the Option. The committee recommends exploring this discrepancy further, both at the level of the Literature committee and the department as a whole. It also recommends revisiting the potential of English 438: Critical Approaches to Literature for assessment of theory.

The committee also cited the need to arrive at a greater departmental consensus about the definition of “theory.” In our discussion, committee members alluded to, and incorporated in their assessment, various understandings of theory. Not all of these definitions were compatible or reconcilable, yet all of them are potentially valid according to the terms of the discipline of literary studies, and they reflect the diverse understandings of theory that Literature faculty bring to the classroom. The committee also acknowledges that this issue speaks more to the changing, fluid state of theory within our discipline than it does to any specific concerns within our department.

For the purposes of this year's assessment, committee members evaluated the extent to which all valid understandings of theory are informing student work. Given the expansive nature of theory, we found that there was nonetheless a remarkable consistency in our students' ability to incorporate various approaches to and implementations of theory in their scholarly work.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.

N/A

5. Changes to SLOs?: Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

N/A

6. Assessment Plan. Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan?

Assessment work in the English Department is always completely guided and aligned with the 5 year Assessment Plans (all six of them). We begin with the plans and stay with them. The only changes we ever have are in small supplemental tasks, which are not part of the actual assessment work. The changes are generally necessitated by an inability to fully complete a supplemental task due to organizational parameters, and are accounted for in our Annual Assessment Reports.

The English Department has updated or made adjustments in some of the Assessment Plans based on 1) discovery of previous errors in writing the initial 5 year Plans and 2) the overwhelming workload necessitated by six different, comprehensive 5 year Assessment Plans. In completing a self-study, writing six 5 year Assessment Plans, and conducting assessment all in one year (during 2010-2011) in addition to regular teaching, service, research and administrative duties, the English Department was quite swamped by work. Returning to the 5 year plans, on a year by year basis, we discover inadvertent errors and overwhelming assessment workloads. Therefore, we make small adjustments that will either correct our previous errors and/or alleviate some of the workload. During 2012-2013 adjustments were made to the Honors and Graduate option Assessment Plans. The corrected plans were sent to Gregory Mena, Marilyn Filbeck, and Bonnie Paller February 16, 2013.

7. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

N/A

8. Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.

The committee completed the supplementary task from the 5 year Plan—"review of assessment materials for usefulness & flexibility"—in its ratification of the procedure for assessing SLO #3.

In addition to our assessment of SLO #3, the committee (acting on the recommendation in last year's committee's assessment report), examined the Literature Option's gateway course, English 355: Writing About Literature, in order to address any "potential disconnects" between the way the course was taught across all sections and/or between the course and upper-division Literature courses. Last year's committee also raised the possibility that, since 355 is often taught by lecturers, it may be desirable to encourage more full-time faculty to teach 355.

This year's committee gathered syllabi from all sections of 355 offered in the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters (a total of 10 sections). The committee examined these syllabi to determine the following: 1) the number of full-time faculty and lecturers teaching the course, 2) how the course is being conceptualized and designed, and 3) whether there are any striking or significant differences in approach across sections.

The committee noted that full-time faculty taught 2 of the 5 sections offered in Fall 2012, and 4 of the 5 sections offered in Spring 2013. The committee concluded that full-time faculty were already significantly involved in the gateway course. The committee further concluded that there is remarkable consistency across sections. Each section focused on teaching students the basic formal structures and generic parameters of fiction, poetry, and drama as well as teaching students techniques for the close analysis of works from each of those genres. All sections were found to conform to the catalog description for English 355: "Intensive study of the literary genres of poetry, prose, fiction and drama. Emphasis on written analysis of selected works in each genre. Development of criteria for responsible judgment."

As a result of this review, the committee decided that there is no need to take any action in modifying English 355.