

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of English
Undergraduate B.A. Program in English
2015-2016
Key Assessment Findings

Senior Comprehensive Examination

Format and evaluation. The undergraduate comprehensive examination in English consists of two sections completed over four hours on the same day. Section I includes objective and essay questions involving major authors and works, literary terms, historical backgrounds, literary periods, themes, and intellectual backgrounds. Section II presents a literary passage for close analysis (including scansion of verse), and two additional passages for comparison.

Examinations are written and evaluated by a committee of faculty chaired by the department's director of undergraduate studies, then voted on by the full department.

UNDERGRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
AY2011-2012 to AY2015-2016

	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2011-2012		0.00%	16	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	16
AY2012-2013	2	8.70%	17	73.91%	4	17.39%		0.00%	23
AY2013-2014	1	4.00%	23	92.00%	1	4.00%		0.00%	25
AY2014-2015		0.00%	26	96.30%	1	3.70%		0.00%	27
AY2015-2016		0.00%	13	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	13
TOTAL	3	2.88%	95	91.35%	6	5.77%	0	0.00%	104

Note:

1) Milestone outcomes are included in the categories High Pass and Pass with Honors if these designations were explicitly indicated in the students' milestone record.

2) Category "High Pass" includes both "High Pass" and "Pass with distinction."

3) The count in this table is based on the exam outcomes of all attempts in an academic year.

Table of Results
Student Learning Assessment Rubric
Department of English
Senior Comprehensive Exam 2015-2016

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1) Knowledge of Literary History	8	62%	5	38%	0	0%	2.62	0.51	13
2) Knowledge of Literary Terms	5	38%	4	31%	4	31%	2.08	0.86	13
3) Ability to Analyze Literary Texts Closely	3	23%	10	77%	0	0%	2.23	0.44	13
4) Ability to Write a Coherent and Well Documented Essay	4	31%	9	69%	0	0%	2.31	0.48	13

- Note: 1) The "N" represents the number of students at each level of performance for each trait.
 2) The "%" represents the percentage of the number of students falling at the level performance for each trait against the total number of students.
 3) The mean is the average of all scores across the levels within the trait.
 4) The standard deviation (SD) is the measure of the variability of the data set, indicating how "spread out" these data are from the mean value.

In recent years, administration of the senior comprehensive examination has evolved into, effectively, a two-stage process. All seniors must sit for the exam during the Fall term. Evaluators may then require particular students to re-take, after advising, particular sections or more rarely the entire exam. This process has resulted in more consistent overall performance as well as a higher percentage of final passing grades.

Study groups and a scansion workshop have also improved preparation and performance.

**Senior Coordinating Seminar (Capstone)
Grade distribution, 2015-2016**

	Fall 2015	%	Spring 2016	%
A	3	21%	5	38%
A-	3	21%	3	23%
B+	3	21%	1	8%
B	0		2	15%
B-	2	14%	0	
C+	1	7%	0	
C	0		1	8%
C-	1	7%	1	8%
W	1	7%		

The Senior Coordinating Seminar for English majors is a year-long experience in which each small group remains together with the same instructor over two semesters. The first semester is devoted primarily to reading and discussing the works of a single author (or focused group of authors) in historical and aesthetic context. During the second semester, the group engages critical perspectives and each student completes a substantial research project.

During 2015-2016, two seminars were offered with 14 students total (one of whom withdrew during the first semester). This was a decline from the previous academic year, when 27 students completed both semesters. From Fall to Spring semesters, 7 of 13 students improved their grades, while 1 made a lower grade, and 5 performed at a consistent level over the academic year.

Curricular Improvements

The English department faculty are committed to maintaining and improving a quality undergraduate major focused on literary history and aesthetics.

During 2014-2015 the faculty continued to discuss a curricular challenge arising as an unanticipated consequence of the Freshman Year Experience. English traditionally offered an array of courses at the 200-level, designed for non-majors as part of the Arts & Sciences distribution requirements; higher-level courses served majors and minors as well as students with developed interests in literature. The FYE, with heavy demand for instructors, significantly limited our ability to staff the 200-level non-majors classes, many of which could not be scheduled. One result was a noticeable increase of non-majors (including students from outside Arts & Sciences) in more advanced courses, seeking to fulfill general education requirements.

English faculty agree that diverse populations in English literature classes bring in a welcome range of backgrounds, with many interested and engaged students who happen not to be in traditional humanities (or even liberal arts) majors. Inevitably, however, a significant number of students in advanced courses come without the preparation or level of interest previously assumed in these classes. Thus the challenge: how to combine in courses the traditional mentoring of English majors, while providing quality educational experiences for non-majors with limited backgrounds and preparation in our field.

Building on discussions held in previous academic years, during 2015-2016 the department sought to develop the undergraduate curriculum in two ways: (1) rebuilding a 200-level curriculum serving non-majors, with more full-time faculty teaching these courses, and (2) offering advanced courses likely to engage the general student population as well as literature majors and minors. Attention to these goals is continuing.

Submitted by Glen M. Johnson
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