Academic Assessment Plan

B.A. Program in English

Academic Program Assessment Plan

The English Department Assessment Committee (Instructors Karen Madison and Raina Lyons, and Advisor Carole Lane) believes that we can fulfill our goal of adequately assessing our graduates by internally creating our own graduating senior assessment test. The results would be correlated with the individual student's English studies grade point average (GPA) and, possibly, with the length of career (number of semesters taken to graduate). This plan is, however, a proposed assessment plan contingent upon faculty approval, and it cannot be considered until the first half of the fall 2016 semester.

History

We conducted research into a variety of different assessment methods used by our peer institutions, with the goal of either adding a new component to our assessment, perhaps in the form of a less expensive test than the ETS standardized test, or pursuing a new method of assessment. We have looked for evaluation methods that would truly assess the competency of our graduating English majors, including surveying the assessment programs of our peer institutions. We found that only a couple of the peer institutions we surveyed actually had assessment programs in place.

Our research presented us with three different options:

1. Administering the standardized ETS subject test and correlating it with qualitative data
2. Collecting portfolios of students' work from the beginning and end of their U of A undergraduate careers, which would be evaluated and compared
3. Creating a self-administered, departmentally-created Proficiency in English Studies (PIES) Exam and correlating the PIES scores with other student data, such as GPA and number of semesters to graduation

Currently the Assessment Committee is recommending to our faculty the third assessment option listed above. As we are tasked with creating a self-study assessment, we believe creating our own exam will suffice for our purposes. However, adoption and implementation of this proposal will depend on the English Department faculty's approval and participation.

The plan presented herein, therefore, is a proposed assessment plan, contingent upon faculty approval, to be discussed during the first half of the fall 2016 semester.

Program Goals

1. Students in the English B.A. program should acquire both general and specialized knowledge in their field, as well as develop academic skills in preparation for careers in academia, education, and a number of ALTAC careers.
2. B.A. students should also gain professionalization skills and knowledge in preparation for going on the job market or applying to graduate programs.
3. B.A. students should be able to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. B.A. students should demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of literary works in the English language, from the Medieval Period to the present. This knowledge should include a basic understanding of broad concepts such as genres, periods, and movements as well as a familiarity with a variety of individual texts that exemplify these concepts.
2. B.A. students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of and an appreciation for diversity, specifically as it relates to a wide range of English-speaking cultures.
3. B.A. students should possess skills for the appreciation and critical reading of literary texts, including a general knowledge of techniques of literary analysis and criticism, and be able to use these techniques to write intelligently about literature.
4. B.A. students should be able to analyze, create, and defend complex arguments in correct and rhetorically effective written English.
5. B.A. students majoring only in English should be able to complete their degrees in 4 years; B.A. students with additional majors should be able to complete their degrees in 4 to 5 years, depending upon number and type of additional majors.
6. Graduating B.A. students should be able to secure employment, or to pursue additional education, that will aid them in developing professional careers.

Assessment of Student Learning

Methods

Direct Assessment Method:
• Ratings of student skills by field experience supervisors

Our Proficiency in English Studies Exam would be created by our faculty (field experience supervisors), and evaluated to their standards. The exam would be administered and proctored via Blackboard.

We will ask each faculty member to develop 15 discipline/area questions that would stem from our required survey courses and Introduction to Shakespeare course. Five of these questions would be general knowledge. Five would be advanced level of knowledge from the courses. Five would be diversity related within those courses. These questions will become a pool of questions to be used in a randomly generated test administered through a self-grading Blackboard tool on an English Department Advising Blackboard page. Each year, a new test will be generated for graduating seniors.

The results generated would reveal graduates to be proficient, accomplished, adequate, challenged.
• Proficient: 16-20 correct
• Accomplished: 11-15 correct
• Adequate: 6-10 correct
• Challenged: 0-5 correct

Indirect Assessment Methods:

> Each individual student's score on the PIES Exam will be correlated with additional, qualitative data about the student, to provide a more comprehensive profile of the student, and to offset aberrations in test scores. These external measures may include
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> - Students' GPAs in major
> - Number of semesters to graduation and graduation rates
> - Admission rates into graduate programs
> - Rates of successful employment in ALTAC fields

Timelines for Data Collection and Analysis

Fall 2016:

- September: request the English Department faculty's approval of and collaboration in the creation of the PIES exam.
- September/October: (Upon approval) begin working with Blackboard support to create the course template for English Department Advising.
- December: (Upon completion of the collaboration and revision of the exam questions) create the exam in Blackboard.

Spring 2017:

- March: As soon as the students have declared an intention to graduate, they will be added to the Blackboard course. Ideally, we would require students to take the timed assessment exam as a requirement for graduation.
- March: Score students' exams.
- April: (Once the students' exams are scored) correlate student test data with GPA and additional available qualitative data.
- May: (When the assessment is completed) write a report of our findings and evaluate our assessment method.

Use of Results

The most important information to share about the results will be two-fold: we will look at ways in which the Dept. of English might better serve our students, and we will also use the results of our assessment as a tool for a departmental revision process, once we are aware of strengths and weaknesses of this assessment protocol. The results of our assessment will impact decisions on curriculum and instruction by revealing areas our students are not acquiring the knowledge our faculty deem necessary for well-rounded English majors.

We hope to use our data to confirm that our students are meeting our expectations regarding outcomes. By correlating qualitative data, such as GPA within major (which indicates not only knowledge but also classroom participation, quality of writing, and research ability across all of the students' English courses), we hope to identify which students are doing poorly on the exam because of their lack of engagement in the curriculum that is offered to them. Conversely, we hope to identify gaps in the knowledge of otherwise exemplary students. Once we've identified these gaps in knowledge, we can address ways in which our curriculum might better meet the students' needs.