Academic Assessment Report
B.A. Program in English, 2017

Academic Program Assessment Plan

The English Department Assessment Committee (Instructors Karen Madison and Raina Lyons), with faculty approval, assessed our Spring 2017 graduates' proficiency in English studies with an internally created senior assessment exam. The committee has correlated the results with each individual graduating student's English studies grade point average (GPA in major).

History
The Committee conducted research into a variety of assessment methods used by our peer institutions with the goal of either adding a new component to our assessment in the form of a less expensive test than the ETS standardized test or pursuing a consequential method, differing from our previous assessments. (See Appendix A: Previous Protocol, page 10) We sought evaluation methods that would accurately assess the competency of our graduating English majors, including surveying the assessment programs of our peer institutions. We found that few surveyed institutions actually had assessment programs in place and that none were as comprehensive in their methods as the Department desired.

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, department-created Proficiency in English Studies (PIES) Exam to correlate the PIES score with other student data, such as GPA and number of semesters to graduation.

The Assessment Committee recommended to our faculty the third assessment option listed above. As we were tasked with creating a self-study assessment, the Committee asked for and received the English Department faculty's approval in October 2016 with an agreement that faculty members would contribute a pool of questions to use in the creation of the exam.

The Committee designed the PIES exam as a tool to measure the successful accomplishment of our program and student learning goals:

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 was created by the Assessment Committee using a pool of questions generated by our faculty (field experience supervisors) with the target courses in mind and evaluated by faculty standards. The exam was administered and proctored via Blackboard by the Assessment Committee members. (See Appendix B: Assessment Instructions, page 11-2)

Most faculty members developed fifteen discipline/area questions each that stemmed from our required survey courses and Introduction to Shakespeare course. Five of these questions were general knowledge. Five were advanced level of knowledge from the courses. Five were diversity related within those courses. These questions became a set of questions to be used in the randomly generated PIES exam administered through the self-grading Blackboard tool, Respondus Monitor on an English Department Advising Blackboard course link. (See Appendix C: Sample Questions, pages 13-7)

Each student signed into his/her University Blackboard account to access the course in order to take the exam and to answer a set of thirty questions delivered individually (rather than as a

full page of questions) and randomly to insure independent attempts. The Committee also required each student to use the Respondus Monitor, which recorded the entire testing procedure, to preclude access to internet, notes, and/or study partners to ensure untainted results.
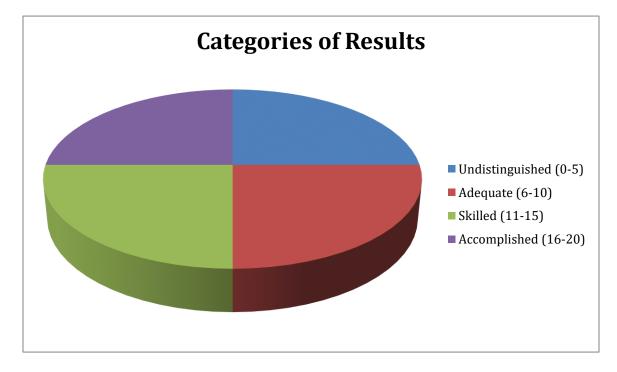
Indirect Assessment Methods

Each individual student's score on the PIES Exam was correlated with additional, qualitative data about the student. These external measures were
• Students' GPAs in major
• Number of semesters to graduation and graduation rates.

The results generated reveal graduates to be accomplished, skilled, adequate, and undistinguished.

• Accomplished: 16-20 correct
• Skilled: 11-15 correct
• Adequate: 6-10 correct
• Undistinguished: 0-5 correct

Fifty students took the exam out of the fifty-four students who applied for graduation (ninety-three percent of graduating seniors participating). Of the fifty-four, one decided to delay until December. Three others did not take the exam or correspond about the test. According to Institutional Research, the percentage reveals a "respectable" confidence level in outcome.

(See Appendix D. Testing Sample Statement, page 18)

Timelines for Data Collection and Analysis

<u>Fall 2016:</u>
- October: The Committee met with the English Department faculty members to request their approval of and collaboration in the creation of the PIES exam.
- October/December: The Committee began working with Blackboard support to create the course template for English Department Advising.

<u>Spring 2017:</u>
- January/February: The Committee sorted and coded the questions and developed the exam.
- February/March: The exam was uploaded into the Respondus Monitor program, along with a separate, three-question Excellence in Teaching faculty committee survey for its own use. (See Appendix E: Teaching Excellence Survey, page 19)
- March: As soon as students declared an intention to graduate, the Committee added their information to the Blackboard course. The Committee worked with the Dean's Office to insure that the timed assessment exam is now registered as a requirement for graduation on students' degree audits, as is the Senior Writing Assessment requirement.
- April: The deadline for taking the PIES exam was April 15, and after that date, the students' test data was compared with departmental GPAs. Only students who graduated in Spring 2017 took the exam.
- May: The Committee prepared a report of its findings and evaluated its assessment method and sent the Chair of the Teaching Excellence Committee the results of the survey. We also created a class on Blackboard for 2018 graduates and uploaded the newly created 2018 exam.

Use of Results

The most important information to share about the results is two-fold: we will examine ways in which the Dept. of English might better serve our students, and we will utilize 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 affect decisions on curriculum and instruction by revealing areas in which our students are not acquiring the knowledge our faculty deem necessary for well-rounded English major graduates.

This assessment is part of an over-all plan and, as such, is the first year of a three-year study. It is unrealistically harsh or optimistic to base the state of the department on one test for one year's group of students.

PIES data will be collected for three years to insure uniform accuracy of our results and conclusions. Since this is the first year of this particular exit exam, we can report only the

limited data corresponding with the 2017 PIES outcomes that relate to program goals and student learning outcomes.

Program Goals

At present, our data confirm that many of our students are meeting our expectations regarding program goals. However, a substantial number of our students are not. Overall, the data reveal a full range of results with room for improvement.

We have ascertained the percentage of students in the English B.A. program 1.) who have acquired both general and specialized knowledge in their field and 2.) who have developed academic skills in preparation for careers in academia, education, and a number of ALT-AC careers.

Totals	
Accomplished	7
Skilled	10
Adequate	12
Undistinguished	21

When we correlate the overall scores with the students' GPAs in Major, we find unexpected results. Some of our highest GPA students scored poorly, while some of our lowest did comparatively well. Most of our students fall into the 3.0 range, and surprisingly, half of these students scored in the undistinguished range.

4.0 GPA / 10 Students	
Accomplished	2
Skilled	2
Adequate	4
Undistinguished	2

3.0 GPA / 36 Students	
Accomplished	5
Skilled	8
Adequate	5
Undistinguished	18

2.0 GPA / 2 Students	
Accomplished	0
Skilled	0
Adequate	1
Undistinguished	1

1.0/ GPA / 2 Students	
Accomplished	0
Skilled	0
Adequate	2
Undistinguished	0

We will continue to correlate 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). Eventually, we will examine the results of three years of testing.

After three years of testing, the Department will endeavor to identify which students do poorly on the exam because of their lack of engagement in the curriculum and/or with the exam itself. (See Appendix F. Student Correspondence, page 20) Conversely, we hope to identify gaps in the knowledge of otherwise exemplary students. Once we have identified these gaps in knowledge, we can address ways in which our curriculum might better meet the students'

needs.

<u>Student Learning Outcomes</u>
Although three years of data will be collected to insure the integrity of the assessment tool, the immediate results of the exit exam were achieved by this method:

Each individual student's score on the 2017 PIES Exam was 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 were
- Students' GPAs in major
- Number of semesters to graduation and graduation rates
- Margin of error: Students answered 30 questions and were allowed to miss 10 questions to achieve a perfect 20/20 score. (If a student scored 16/30, our results were 16/20). (See Appendix G: Offset Margin, page 21)

The numbers collected reflect *three* of the six Assessment of Student Learning Criteria:

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.

The *fourth* Assessment of Student Learning Criterion is evidenced in the Major GPA with the grades assigned as qualifying the graduate to satisfy his Senior Writing Requirement as found in the catalogue:

Writing Requirement: All upper-division English courses require a research or an analytical paper except ENGL 4003 and the courses in creative writing (ENGL 3013, ENGL 4013, ENGL 4023, ENGL 4073). For this reason, all students who fulfill the requirements for a major in English thereby fulfill the Fulbright College writing requirement. In addition, 4000-level courses (except for those noted above) require more intensive research by, and more active participation from, students than 3000-level courses do and require each student to complete a paper that can be included as a writing sample with applications to graduate programs or professional schools.

4. B.A. students should be able to analyze, create, and defend complex arguments in correct and rhetorically effective written English.

Future Tasks

Immediate Timeline
2018 PIES Assessment Exam
Spring 2017:
- May 2017: Create 2018 PIES exam from the faculty question pool and upload it to the Blackboard class, Proficiency In English Assessment.

Spring 2018:
- March: Load the declared graduating seniors' IDs, user names, major GPAs and GPAs onto the Blackboard "course." Notify students that the assessment exam is available.
- March/April: Evaluate the results of the PIES exam.
- April/May: Create the 2018 Assessment Report.

Future Timelines
2019 PIES Assessment Exam
Spring 2018:
- May 2018: Create 2019 PIES exam from the existing faculty question pool. Create the 2019 PIES course on Blackboard.

Fall 2018:
December: Upload exam to Blackboard.

Spring 2019:
- March 2019: Load the declared graduating seniors' IDs and user names onto the Blackboard "course." Notify students that the assessment exam is available.
- March/April: Evaluate the results of the third PIES exam in the three-year sequence.
- April/May: Create the 2019 Assessment Report that evaluates all three years of data (2017-9), taking into consideration comparisons of the percentages of the four "student rating" categories, the five "question" categories, and the particular questions missed.
- May/June: Determine the correspondence between the data and the Departmental Goals and Student Assessment Outcomes.

2020 PIES Assessment Exam
- July 2019/March 2020: Create and administer a survey for assessing the one remaining Program Goal (relating to retention) and the two Student Learning Outcomes (relating to retention, graduation, and employment).
   Program Goals:
      3.) B.A. students should be able to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

Student Learning Outcomes:

     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.

- March 2020: Gather declared graduating seniors' IDs and user names. Load the data onto the Blackboard "course." Notify students that the assessment survey is available.
- March/April: Evaluate the results of the survey.
- April/May: Create the 2020 Assessment Report.
- May: Determine the necessity of repeating the PIES assessment exam, utilizing the results reported in the 2019 PIES report to determine the need to update the current faculty pool of questions and/or update or adapt assessment methods.

Suggestions for Score Improvement and Remediation of Concerns

At this point, we recognize that we do have a wide range of scores in our designated categories (accomplished, skilled, adequate, and undistinguished). Although not everyone is accomplished, the Committee believes that the number of students who score inside the preferred ranges (accomplished and skilled) can be increased with two strategies:

Improving Scores

• The Assessment Committee suggests that the question pool be edited to exclude parochial (teacher-specific) questions.
• Add more nineteenth-century British literature questions because our majors heavily enroll in these courses, and the original exam pool has a low percentage of representative questions.
• Cross reference the missed questions represented within each of the four student categories in the third year of testing, as a means of clearly understanding our numbers.
• Evaluate the number of students who missed a question that came from a particular course (especially the surveys) that s/he did not take.
• Consider posting the grades to the transcript (as stated in the Catalogue of Studies) so that students are not tempted to discount the importance of the exam. (See Appendix H: Suggested Catalogue Emendations, page 22)

Improving Response

Although we have a 93 percent rate of response with our exam, we will encourage early student acceptance of and engagement in the following manner:

• Inform advisees, via our Fulbright College advisor, Sarah Hayes Langley, of the requirement.

• Recruit our Sigma Tau Delta president as an Assessment Committee member to inform STD members of the departmental requirement and to promote positive interactions in regard to it.

• Establish a drawing to be held the day after exam deadline to encourage timely responses ($50 gift certificates or comparable prizes).

• Post Facebook announcements and positive commentary by our faculty about the exam.

• Explain in our exam subject classes (surveys and Shakespeare) that the assessment is part of students' degree audit (along with our senior writing requirement).

• Remind our English majors in the fall semester of the upcoming exam to ensure their familiarity with the department's catalogue requirements.

• Consider updating the assessment requirement as listed in the catalogue in order to mitigate discontent/dissatisfaction and its attendant issues arising from semesters when there is no necessity to administer the exam. (See Appendix H: Suggested Catalogue Emendations, page 22)
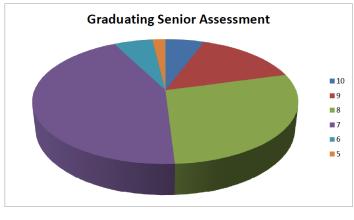
Appendix A: Previous Protocol

Department of English B.A. Senior Assessment Report 2015

English Department faculty rated the analytical and writing competencies of our graduating seniors, each of whom was asked to designate a course and teacher for evaluative purposes. A uniform rubric was used by the evaluators:

> 10-9 Extraordinary
> 8-7 Superior
> 6-5 Competent
> 4-3 Adequate
> 2-1 Mediocre

Of seventy-nine graduating seniors, we received fifty-six responses. Faculty gave eleven of these students Extraordinary status. Three of those students were rated as the strongest graduating seniors in the two evaluative categories (analytical skills and writing skills). Faculty rated thirty-eight students as having Superior skills in the two categories, with fifteen students given 8's and twenty-three given 7's. Faculty found four of the 56 graduates to be in the Competent range. Three of those were given 6's. Four graduates were assigned 4's, placing them in the Adequate range. No students were assigned below a 4.

Graduating Senior Assessment

Legend:
- 10
- 9
- 8
- 7
- 6
- 5

Numbers are color-coded counter-clockwise.

Lane, Lyons, Madison, Montgomery 2015

These findings do not indicate a need for changes to be made to our undergraduate English major; however, we are in the process of adding to our present form of assessment. We used to administer a standardized test every two years to a random subset of English B.A. graduating seniors, but it became impossible to convince a representative sample of students to take the test. It was financially impractical for us to administer the expensive test to the entire graduating class, so we did not see how we could call it a requirement for graduation. Because our Director of Undergraduate Studies has been on emergency leave since December 2014, we were unable to solve this conundrum in time for this spring's assessment; however, we have put one of our advisors on summer pay (for one month) to research the possibility of adding a new component to our assessment in the future, perhaps in the form of a less expensive test that actually would be a requirement for graduation.

Appendix B: Assessment Instructions

Hello Graduate!

Congratulations on achieving your goal of graduating from our Department of English undergraduate program. We are incredibly proud of you because we know of the rigorous challenges you have met and how hard you worked to get to this point.

Now that you have arrived, we need for you to complete one final task, in order to fulfill your **senior assessment requirement**. As mentioned in the *U of A Catalogue of Studies*, all graduating seniors are required to participate in a "senior assessment." This year the assessment takes the form of an exam, which has been designed to test your knowledge from the courses all English majors are required to take (the survey courses and Shakespeare).

We've tried to make this process as simple as possible for you.

1. When you applied for graduation, we added your id number to the roster of a special Blackboard "course," **Proficiency in English Assessment**. (Note: this isn't really a course; it is just the easiest way for us to facilitate the exam.)

2. **By April 15**, you will take the Respondus on-line exam, as well as a three-question survey. You will find a short sample exam and the directions for uploading the Respondus Lockdown Browser onto your own computer on the Blackboard "class" page (for those with webcams. You can easily uninstall it after the exam, if you wish.) The list of labs on campus that have Respondus Lockdown Browsers installed (PC's with webcams) are located in the following locations:

   Mullins Library Computer Lab
   Arkansas Union Lab
   JB Hunt Computer Lab

   The Student Technology Center (STC) at the Union has these items for checkout:

   Webcams
   Laptops
   Headsets

   *Don't forget to take your student ID to checkout items at the STC and there are lab operators available if you have any questions about the equipment.

Should you have technical difficulties in downloading the Respondus Lockdown Monitor or taking the exam, contact:

Help Desk
479-575-6804
bbhelp@uark.edu

Help Desk Hours
Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Sunday, 4 to 11 p.m.

3. After you complete the exam, the assessment portion of your senior assessment requirement will be satisfied. (Note: The exam will need to be completed **by April 15**. If you don't complete the exam by that time, your assessment requirement will not be met, and you will not qualify for graduation. Should you apply for graduation late, please contact us at engladv@uark.edu so we can allow you access to the exam.)

The exam consists of thirty multiple choice questions that most will find easily answered in fifteen minutes, although we are allowing extended time for those who require it. We will score the exams, and then we will compile the information (without using your names) for a general assessment report about your graduating class.

This exam will not affect your GPA, nor will the results be used against you in any way. It isn't necessary to try to study or cram for the exam, either. Really, this exam is to assess how well our courses are teaching you. We do ask that you make an honest, good faith effort to try to perform well on the exam, however, as your results will be very valuable to us as a metric of the success of our curriculum.

We wish to assure you that this requirement is absolutely necessary for our accreditation—that is, for the Department of Higher Education to certify that your degree comes from an academically reputable institution and department.

Regards,

Karen Lentz Madison & Raina Lyons

Appendix C: Sample Questions

Proficiency in English Exam, Spring 2017 (Sample 15 of 30 questions)

1.   Which poet is widely viewed to have inherited the mantle of W.B. Yeats?

a.   Eavan Boland

b.   Paul Muldoon

c.   **Seamus Heaney**

d.   Geoffrey Hill

e.   Les Murray

2.   Which of the following best describes the genre of Paradise Lost?

a.   Romance

b.   Epyllion

c.   Alexandrine

d.   **Epic**

e.   Parable

3.   T. S. Eliot is not the author of

a.   "**The Idea of Order at Key West."**

b.   "The Hollow Men."

c.   "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

d.   "The Waste Land."

e.   "Ash Wednesday."

4. Beowulf wrestled with

a. Hrothgar.

b. Dracula.

c. Smaug.

d. **Grendel.**

e. Olaf.

5. My Ántonia is a novel written by
a. F. Scott Fitzgerald

b. Toni Morrison.

c. Christopher Marlowe.

d. Flannery O'Connor.

e. **Willa Cather.**

6. Of what poetic form is Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" a classic example?

a. Elegiac stanza

c. Sestina

b. Sonnet

d. **Villanelle**

e. Sonnet

7. Stories associated with King Arthur and his court belong to the Matter of

a. **Britain.**

b. France.

c. Antiquity.

d. England.

e. Wales.

8. Beowulf is set in

a. **Scandinavia.**

b. Anglo-Saxon England.

c. Germany.

d. Ireland.

e. France

9. During what time period did the English Renaissance take place (assuming it actually occurred)?

a. First to fourth centuries

b. Fifth to fourteenth centuries

c. **Fifteenth to Seventeenth centuries**

d. Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries

e. Twentieth century

10.   On which river does The Heart of Darkness begin?

a.   **Thames**

b.   Niger

c.   Nile

d.   Brahmaputra

e.   Congo

11.   Which of the following is credited with introducing blank verse on the Elizabethan stage?

a.   William Shakespeare

b.   Ben Jonson

c.   John Webster

d.   Elizabeth I

e.   **Christopher Marlowe**

12.   Which one of the following was abducted from Africa and sold as a slave in colonial Massachusetts?

a.   Anne Bradstreet

b.   Leatherstocking

c.   Jesse Helm

d.   **Phillis Wheatley**

e.   Edward Taylor

13. A Room of One's Own features Woolf's narrative of

a. Alfred Hitchcock.

b. **Judith Shakespeare.**

c. Orlando Woolf.

d. Judith Butler.

e. the English Civil War.

14. "Orientalism" refers to the stereotypical way that Western literature has traditionally depicted the culture of Asia and the Middle East. Who coined this term?

a. Lionel Trilling

b. Virginia Woolf

c. **Edward Said**

d. Frantz Fanon

e. Gertrude Stein

15. The First Folio is

a. the Italian source of Shakespeare's Roman and Juliet

b. **a collection of Shakespeare's plays produced after his death by two actor friends**

c. the "Bad Folio" of Hamlet, containing many misattributions of lines and nonsensical lines

d. the theory that Shakespeare's plays were written by Queen Elizabeth's prime minister, the Earl of Leicester.

e. what Portia mockingly calls the Prince of Morocco in The Merchant of Venice.

Appendix D: Testing Sample Statement

Graduating Seniors Testing Sample Statement*

According to Gary Gunderman, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, populations of 100 or less are difficult to get a picture of using a sample, but he does not think it is feasible to shoot for a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of five. That would require a sample of 49 [Ours is 50]. We have to consider what is manageable for the test administrators, graders and students as well as what is financially possible.

Gunderman chose a margin of error of 15% and a confidence level of 90% with a population of 100, which gives a sample size of 24, which he thinks are at least respectable numbers.

Those are not exactly confidence numbers we would want to put in a dissertation, he says, but the purpose of assessing learning outcomes is to provide feedback to the department on what can/should be changed about what they are doing in regards to student learning.

If the results support what our faculty is actually seeing in the classrooms, then we can have more confidence in the results and make changes to improve future scores. If the results do not support what faculty is seeing in the classrooms, then maybe we would want to look at the results more critically and make changes the next time we do the assessment.

*Adapted from an email statement to Karen Lentz Madison from Gary Gunderman (21 October 2016), Director of Institutional Research and Assessment.
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Appendix E: Teaching Excellence Survey

Teaching Excellence Survey for Graduating Seniors
Created by and Administered for the English Department TES Committee

1.   I have learned how to write better from my English courses.

        yes
        no

2.   b. I have developed critical thinking skills from my English courses.

        yes
         no

3.   I received excellent instruction from the following teachers in the English department

        (Write in name/s.)

Appendix F: Student Correspondence

Hello,

First of all, thanks for taking the exam and teaching survey that will be used to evaluate the Department's programs and goals**.** We do understand that some of you think it was a waste of your time to do these tasks, but the exam, at least, is part of the major's requirement, and in the past, actually was used to quantify the individuals talking it, rather than to "examine" the Department itself as to how well it is achieving its purpose.

> **Assessment Requirement:** Every senior English major must take the program assessment exam administered by the department each spring semester to graduate. Exam results will not affect GPA, although the student's score will be noted on his or her permanent academic record. This requirement may be waived in extraordinary circumstances by the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. Contact your adviser for more information.

While not being noted on your academic record as the catalogue states, the Assessment Committee will correlate your score with additional qualitative data, such as your Major GPA (which takes into account knowledge, research abilities, participation, your Senior Writing Assessment--another requirement for graduation) and your status (last semester senior). We hope the comparison provides a more comprehensive profile of you as a student, and to offset aberrations in test scores. In future years, the Department hopes to measure other significant factors relating to retention, graduate school acceptance, or job placement, for example.

Our rationale for choosing such a protocol is based on our extensive examination of a variety of methods (one being a portfolio). However, the other forms were very expensive with no proof of a better outcome for what we are seeking. Unfortunately, we did not have the funding or faculty for those other forms of assessment. Even if we could afford to compensate them, asking the same faculty who evaluated your course work to also oversee your indirect assessment process would have undermined the results in the eyes of our report's intended audience. The Department is required to assess its program for the Dean's Office and, in turn, for University accreditation purposes.

And so, we did ask faculty to contribute questions that each thought were important or interesting enough to remember from their survey courses (British, American, and World Literature) and our Introduction to Shakespeare Course. The Assessment Committee went through all of the questions sent us, coding each one as the four just mentioned--but also as diversity questions and as questions we considered extremely difficult.

From those, we chose five diversity related questions, five difficult questions, five American Literature questions, five Shakespeare questions, five British Literature questions, and five World Literature questions. You took an exam with thirty questions. We gave everyone ten incorrect answers *gratis* to mitigate testing glitches (those aberrations in test scores I mentioned earlier).

The PIES Exam is not a perfect system. We've had people with poor marks and those with perfect scores. But it is our first year for this particular task, and we plan to use what we learn to address ways in which our curriculum might better meet all of our students' needs. The assessment is not of the students but of the Department itself, and we could not assess ourselves on how we are doing without an assessment tool, such as our exam.

We trust that this email answers your questions and addresses your concerns, and we genuinely hope that the rest of your semester goes smoothly.

Yours truly,
Dr. Madison and Ms. Lyons

Appendix G: Offset Margin

While not being noted on the students' academic records as the catalogue states, the Assessment Committee correlated their scores with additional qualitative data, such as their Major GPA (which takes into account knowledge, research abilities, participation, the Senior Writing Assessment--another requirement for graduation) and their status (last semester senior).

The comparison serves to provide a more comprehensive profile of each student, and to offset aberrations in test scores. In future years, the Department hopes to measure other significant factors relating to retention, graduate school acceptance, or job placement, for example.

The committee asked faculty to contribute questions that each thought were important or interesting enough to remember from their survey courses (British, American, and World Literature) and our Introduction to Shakespeare Course. The Committee went through all of the questions sent us, coding each one as the four just mentioned--but also as diversity questions and as questions we considered extremely difficult.

From those, we chose five diversity related questions, five difficult questions, five American Literature questions, five Shakespeare questions, five British Literature questions, and five World Literature questions. The students took an exam with thirty questions. We gave each one ten incorrect answers *gratis* to mitigate testing glitches or aberrations in test scores.

Appendix H: Suggested Catalogue Emendations

The Committee suggests either of two strategies that the Department can implement to avoid confusion and resentment (see Appendix E) by updating our assessment requirement in the University Catalogue of Studies. The first acknowledges that the assessment is not noted on a permanent record:

> **Assessment Requirement:** Every senior English major must take the program assessment exam administered by the department each spring semester to graduate. Exam results will not affect GPA, although the student's score will be noted on his or her permanent academic record. This requirement may be waived in extraordinary circumstances by the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. Contact your adviser for more information.

The Committee suggests that the faculty adapt the requirement to read:

> **Assessment Requirement: Final-semester English majors** must take the **Proficiency in English Studies** program assessment exam **when administered by the department** during spring semesters to graduate. Exam results will not affect **the student's GPA or permanent record. However, the student's score will augment the Department's on-going curriculum assessment endeavors.** This requirement may be waived in extraordinary circumstances by the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. ~~Contact your adviser for more information.~~

On the other hand, if the student's score on the PIES exit exam actually were to be noted (which it is not at present) on a permanent record, students would take the exam seriously, as opposed to hurrying to complete it, which we suspect is the case with more than one of our students.

The committee believes that the first strategy is preferable.