

**Annual Academic Assessment Report**  
**M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English**  
**June 23, 2017**

**Results of Analysis of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

Assessment data regarding M.A. and Ph.D. students' comprehensive/candidacy exams, thesis/dissertation defenses, professional presentations and publications, and job placement indicate that the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English are achieving all six student learning outcomes and accomplishing all three program goals. (For descriptions of the program goals, student learning outcomes, and means of assessment, see the attached Academic Assessment Plan, submitted spring of 2015.)

**1. Exams and Defenses**

During the last six years (from the fall of 2011 through the spring of 2017), 59 M.A. students and 47 Ph.D. students completed their programs and graduated. During this time 40 M.A. students successfully defended a thesis to graduate, and 19 M.A. students passed the M.A. comprehensive exam to graduate. Since 2015, M.A. students choosing the thesis option also have had their thesis prospectuses reviewed and approved before being allowed to start writing their theses. Ph.D. students have always been required to write and successfully defend dissertations to graduate. Before being allowed to start their dissertations, these students must also pass a written candidacy exam in a broad area of specialization and an oral candidacy exam in a more narrow area. Overall, students' successful completion of M.A. comprehensive exams, M.A. theses, Ph.D. candidacy exams, and Ph.D. dissertations indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English are achieving Student Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 and Program Goal 1.

The average time to degree for Ph.D. students who graduated during the last six years (from the fall of 2011 through the spring of 2017) was approximately 18 semesters (6 years), and the average time to degree for M.A. students who graduated during this time was approximately 11 semesters (3 years, 2 semesters). It is important to note, however, that the average time to degree for the 30 graduating M.A. students who *started* their M.A. course work in the last six years (i.e., started Fall 2011) was 6 semesters (2 years). When the directors of the M.A. and Ph.D. programs started coordinating the programs in the fall of 2011, they took steps to reconnect with students who had started the M.A. program prior to 2009 but not yet completed their theses/comprehensive exams, advising approximately 11 of these students through to graduation. Although the graduation of previously discontinued students was a positive development for the department as well as the students, their graduation increased the average time to degree for students who completed the M.A. program over the last five years. Overall, the average time to degree for students completing the Ph.D. program indicates that the Ph.D. program is achieving Student Learning Outcome 5 and Program Goal 3. Analysis of the average time to degree

for students completing the M.A. program suggests that the English Department might consider more flexible and efficient means for M.A. students to complete their final projects and graduate. Now that we have new M.A. degree requirements in place (officially approved in 2016), allowing our M.A. students to complete a portfolio project (the new option that replaces the option of the M.A. comprehensive exam), we anticipate continuing to see an improvement in the average time to degree for our M.A. students in the coming years.

## **2. Presentations, Publications, Honors, and Job Placement**

During the last four years (from the spring of 2013 through the spring of 2017), students in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs presented papers and published scholarship on a diverse group of authors and a wide range of literary, cultural, linguistic, and theoretical areas. During this time current M.A. and Ph.D. students presented 136 papers at professional conferences and published 28 articles, book chapters, dictionary entries, or creative writing pieces. Of special note is that four of the papers received outstanding-presentation-at-conference awards from the sponsoring organizations (the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, the Carson McCullers Society, the College English Association, and the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association). Overall, the students' significant level of scholarly contribution indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. programs are achieving Student Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 and Program Goal 1.

Our M.A. and Ph.D. students over the last four years also have had the high quality of their scholarship and their serious dedication to the discipline acknowledged in a range of ways. Honors that they have received outside of the Department of English include 5 James J. Hudson Doctoral Fellowships (awarded by the Graduate School), 4 Fulbright College Dissertation Research Awards, 1 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute Fellowship, 3 African and African American Studies Graduate Fellowships, 1 travel award for an outstanding conference proposal (Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities), 1 travel award for the Computers and Writing Graduate Research Network, 1 award from the Delaware Tribe of Indians Education Program, 1 fellowship to the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, 1 Chancellor's Community Service Award (University of Arkansas), and 4 elections to officer positions for regional or national organizations (secretary of the Nineteenth-Century Literature Committee for the South Central Modern Language Association, Midwest Region's Director of Communications for the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students, Board of Directors for the Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies, and member of the Graduate Student Committee for the Medieval Academy of America).

Students completing the M.A. and Ph.D. programs during the last ten years have gone on to pursue a range of programs and positions after graduation. At least 39 of our M.A. graduates have gone on to start Ph.D. programs (at the University of Arkansas, the University of North Texas, the University of Tennessee, Purdue University, Auburn University, University of Kentucky, Texas A&M, Vanderbilt University, University of Kansas,

Oklahoma State University, Georgia State University, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). One has gone on to attend Harvard Law School. At least 6 of them have gone on to pursue a master's degree in library science (at Rutgers University, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Alabama, and LSU) or to work in a library system. At least 4 have gone on to work as college English instructors. And at least 17 of them have gone on to get an M.A.T. and/or work in the public school system as a secondary English teacher, a primary teacher, an ESL teacher, a substitute teacher, or a teacher's aide. In addition, our M.A. graduates have gone on to secure employment with the following institutions, organizations, or companies:

- Alma School District (English Teacher)
- ArcBest (Director, Customer Solutions)
- Arkansas Leadership Academy, University of Arkansas (Administrator Support Supervisor)
- Arkansas Teacher Corps (Teacher at Lee County High School)
- Arkansas Tech University (Adjunct Faculty)
- Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (English Instructor)
- Barre 3 (Owner)
- Bentonville High School (English Teacher and ESL Teacher)
- Bryant High School (English Teacher)
- Business Communication Lab, Walton College of Business (Tutor Coordinator)
- Central Arkansas Christian Schools (Pre-K through 3rd Grade Teacher)
- Central Arkansas Library System (Youth Programmer)
- City of Fayetteville (Sustainability Coordinator)
- Colegio Granadino in Colombia (English Teacher)
- College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology, Oklahoma State University (Fire Protection Publications Senior Editor)
- Community Clinic of Northwest Arkansas (Communications Manager)
- Dell Medical School at UT-Austin (Director of Communications)
- Department of Political Science, University of Arkansas (Administrative Specialist)
- Elkins High School (English Teacher)
- Engage Target Media (Social Media Marketing Specialist)
- Explainify (Lead Storyteller)
- Fayetteville High School (English Teacher)
- Gravette High School (English Teacher)
- Har-Ber High School (ESL English Teacher)
- Heifer International (Manager of Donor Engagement)
- Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (Director)
- Honors College, University of Arkansas (Director of Retention and Student Advising)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Human Resources Recruiting Manager-Brokerage Role)
- Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts (English Teacher)
- Marian Middle School (English Teacher)

- Miss Liang English School in Taiwan (ESL Teacher)
- Mullins Library, University of Arkansas (Librarian)
- National Writing Project College-Ready Writers Program (Director)
- New Leaf Publishing Group (Assistant Editor)
- Northern Oklahoma College (Language Arts Instructor)
- Northport School District (Teacher's Aide)
- Northwest Arkansas Community College (English Instructor)
- Science and Engineering Magnet High School in Dallas, TX (AP Teacher)
- Sims Memorial Library, Southeastern Louisiana University (Reference/Instruction Librarian)
- SVI (Content Manager and Client Champion)
- Texarkana College (Adjunct English Faculty)
- University Information Technology Services, University of Arkansas (Blackboard Support Specialist)
- University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (Systems and User Experience Librarian & Assistant Professor)
- Walmart (Manager of Executive Communications)
- Walmart (Product Development Specialist)
- Walton Arts Center (Development Coordinator)
- Walton College Honors Program (Academic Adviser and Scholarship Coordinator)
- Washington Junior High School (English Teacher)
- Wayne State University (Digital Publishing Librarian)

Note: For at least 19 of our M.A. alumni who have graduated in the last 10 years, we have not yet been able to confirm any post-graduation information. In addition, not all of the M.A. alumni who have secured positions with the above employers are still working in those offices.

Since the summer of 2007, at least 26 of our Ph.D. graduates have been hired for assistant or associate professor positions at the following domestic and international institutions:

- Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (GA)
- Boise State University
- East West University (Bangladesh)
- Ferum College (VA)
- Georgia Gwinnett College
- Howard Payne University (TX)
- Lander University (SC)
- Oklahoma Baptist University
- Quaid-i-Azam University (Pakistan)
- St. Gregory's University (OK)
- Texas A&M

- Texas A&M University-Qatar
- Ulsan University (South Korea)
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith
- University of Dhaka (Bangladesh)
- University of Pittsburgh (Johnstown)
- University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Park
- University of the Ozarks (AR)
- Volunteer State Community College (TN)
- West Virginia University
- Westfield State University (MA)
- Yarmouk University (Jordan)

In addition, since 2007, at least 19 of our Ph.D. graduates have been hired for instructor, lecturer, post-doctoral, adjunct faculty, and teaching fellow positions at the following institutions:

- Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts
- Auburn University (AL)
- Bryn Mawr College (PA)
- George Mason University (Va)
- LISA Academy (AR)
- Louisiana State University
- Lyon College (Arkansas)
- Northwest Arkansas Community College
- University of Albany
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
- University of Mississippi-Tupelo
- Western Kentucky University

Finally, since 2007, at least 7 of our Ph.D. graduate have been hired for nonteaching or alternative-academic (alt-ac) positions by the following offices, organizations, and institutions:

- Branson Education Center (Ozarks Technical Community College)
- Gardner Realtors (LA)
- Western Governors University (UT)
- Headquarters Office of the Transportation Security Administration (VA)
- Medical School Student Affairs (Washington University, MO)
- Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville)
- School Partnerships Office (University of Arkansas-Fort Smith)
- University Information Technology Services (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville)

Note: For at least 11 of our Ph.D. alumni who graduated in the last 10 years, we have not been able to confirm any post-graduation information. In addition, not all of the Ph.D. alumni who have secured positions with the above employers are still working in those offices.

Overall, the students' successful level of placement into teaching positions, nonteaching or alt-ac positions, and new degree programs indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. programs are achieving Student Learning Outcome 6 and Program Goal 2.

### **3. External Committee Review**

In the spring of 2013, an external committee of three faculty members in English from other institutions visited the English Department and reviewed all its programs, including the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English. The external committee's report included two important suggestions about the M.A. program: 1) that its "coverage model at the graduate level, however commendable in principle, may be out of sync with national trends in the discipline and with the current TT faculty size," and 2) that the department should consider (also because of national trends and tenure-track faculty size) "eliminating the M.A. thesis requirement and, perhaps, substituting for this requirement a seminar or workshop in revising seminar papers into journal articles" or "scholarly papers that might be included in applications for doctoral programs." Our new M.A. program (approved in 2016) responds to both critiques, through 1) offering the option of a specialist or generalist track, and 2) presenting an alternative to the traditional M.A. thesis in the form of a portfolio project and workshop class.

#### **Any Changes to Degree/Certificate Planned or Made on the Basis of the Assessment and Analysis**

The English Department routinely folds new assessment results into the administration of its graduate programs and has been using the above results in a variety of ways to continue monitoring and strengthening the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English. For example, in considering the external committee review, the department formed a Graduate Reform Committee of eight faculty members and one M.A. student, and the committee revised the degree structure of the M.A. program to include a generalist concentration as well as a new specialist concentration, a thesis option as well as a new portfolio option, a portfolio workshop course required for students who choose the portfolio option, and an introduction to graduate studies course required of all incoming M.A. students. These revisions to the M.A. program, approved by the university in 2016, have made the structure of the program more flexible and more in line with current best practices and the size of the faculty in English. In particular, the option to complete a portfolio for the program's final research project and the addition of a portfolio workshop course (to be offered for the first time in the spring semester of 2018) should help M.A. students complete their degrees in a more timely fashion.

Furthermore, the department's Professionalization Committee, often in collaboration with the Graduate Students in English (GSE) organization, has been considering assessment results in planning and implementing workshops and other activities for M.A. and Ph.D. students. For example, the placement of M.A. graduates into a balance of secondary-level teaching positions and non-teaching or corporate positions (see above) is positive confirmation that the committee's focus upon careers outside, as well as inside, academia is helping students respond productively to the current state of the academic job market in the humanities. Extracurricular professionalization activities offered to our graduate students just in the past year have included the following:

- "Making the Most of Time to Degree: MA at the U of A" (10/31/16)
- "Academic Publications: Writing, Revising, and (Re)Submitting" (intended for Ph.D. Students) (11/16/16)
- Graduate Students in English Interdisciplinary Conference, "Appropriating the Adaptations" (3/4/17)
- Roundtable Discussion on Teaching Portfolios (3/14/17)
- Alt-Ac Speakers Panel, "Hire me--I'm qualified!": Selling Your Degree in English on the Alt-Ac Job Market" (4/3/17)

Moreover, the department has started offering a graduate-level course on career options outside the conventional path of teaching as well as a course through which the department can facilitate graduate internships in areas such as grant writing, editing, and publishing. These new workshops and courses are, of course, being offered in addition to courses and workshops designed to prepare students for professional activities such as presenting conference papers, publishing articles, and going on the academic job market.

The Director and Assistant Director of the M.A. and Ph.D. programs have also been using the assessment results to improve strategies for advising students and disseminating information about the programs. For example, the directors developed a new platform and new content for the department's website pages on the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, which will continue to be revised as we continue to balance our emphasis upon academic and alternative-academic professional preparation. To support graduate students in completing their program on schedule, a new advising web page was added in 2015 that includes information on "M.A. Requirements and Timeline," "Ph.D. Requirements and Timeline," and "Exams, Prospectuses, and Reading Lists." (The last page now also includes information on preparing M.A. portfolios.) To encourage students to continue making significant scholarly contributions in their areas of research, new web pages were also added in 2015 on "Graduate Student Awards, Publications, and Presentations" and "Professionalization Resources." To continue supporting students in their preparation for professional careers inside or outside of academia, a new page on "Career Resources" was added.

We hope to cultivate strategic partnerships with nearby nonprofits, corporations, and foundations unique to the Northwest Arkansas area that will lead to training and employment opportunities for our Ph.D. graduates. Finally, we have developed a new Graduate Student

Handbook, which thoroughly covers program requirements, resources, and information about faculty, as well as our evaluation of graduate student progress and exams, prospectuses, and reading lists. We plan to revise and update this handbook on an annual basis.

### **Any Changes to the Assessment Process Made or Planned**

We plan to continue the assessment process we've been developing over the last several years. A focused Strategic Initiatives Committee, initially chaired by Dr. Geoffrey Davis and now chaired by Dr. David Jolliffe, and made up of both faculty and graduate students, will continue addressing graduate student concerns as pinpointed by the GSE survey conducted in the summer of 2015. In addition, the advisors of the graduate English students will continue to collect data on average time to degree for our M.A. and Ph.D. students and job placement (in both academic and nonacademic careers), as well track their annual numbers of awards, publications, conference presentations.

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**Academic Assessment Plan  
M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English  
Submitted Spring 2015**

#### Program Goals

1. Students in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs should acquire specialized knowledge and develop academic skills in preparation for making scholarly contributions to their fields of research.
2. M.A. and Ph.D. students should also gain professionalization skills and knowledge in preparation for going on the job market or applying to other graduate programs.
3. M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

1. M.A. students should be able to write and defend an original thesis of 50-75 pages or to pass a written comprehensive exam.
2. Ph.D. students should be able to write and defend an original dissertation of 250-350 pages and to pass a written candidacy exam covering a broad area of specialization as well as an oral candidacy exam covering a more narrow research area.
3. M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to develop, submit, and present papers for professional conferences.
4. Ph.D. students should also be able to develop, submit, and publish journal articles.
5. M.A. students should be able to complete their degrees within 2 years, and Ph.D. students should be able to complete their degrees within 6 years.
6. Graduating M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to secure employment, or to pursue additional education, that will aid them in developing professional careers.

#### Process for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes



## 1. Timeline:

Assessment data regarding M.A. comprehensive exams, M.A. thesis defenses, Ph.D. candidacy exams, and Ph.D. dissertation defenses are collected and analyzed throughout the year as the exams and defenses are scheduled. Data regarding M.A. and Ph.D. students' conference presentations and journal publications are collected and analyzed at the end of each year, as is information about the placement of graduating students into jobs and new degree programs. At the end of each year, an academic review report is also generated for, and sent to, each student. Additionally, in conjunction with university assessment efforts, an external committee evaluates the M.A. and Ph.D. programs every five years.

## 2. Means of Assessment:

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses the comprehensive exam written by each M.A. student who chooses the program's exam option.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses the thesis prospectus of each M.A. student who chooses the program's thesis option, and a thesis committee of three faculty members assesses the student's performance at his or her thesis defense.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's knowledge of a broad area of specialization during the student's written candidacy exam.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's knowledge of a narrow area of specialization, typically the area to be pursued by the student in his or her dissertation research, during the student's oral candidacy exam.

A dissertation committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's performance at the student's dissertation defense.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies (ADGS) collect and analyze assessment data about M.A. and Ph.D. students' conference presentations and journal publications.

The DGS and ADGS collect and analyze assessment data about the placement of graduating M.A. and Ph.D. students into jobs and new degree programs.

In preparing students' academic review reports, the DGS and ADGS assess each student's overall progress in completing program requirements (coursework in English studies, coursework and proficiency exams in foreign languages, comprehensive exams and thesis defenses for M.A. students, candidacy exams and dissertation defenses for Ph.D. students).

Each academic review report indicates whether a student is making satisfactory progress and, if not, what the student should do to make better progress, and the report is sent to the student as well as to the dean of the Graduate School.

Every five years, in conjunction with university assessment efforts, an external committee of three faculty members from English departments at other institutions evaluates the M.A. and Ph.D. programs and submits an assessment report to the department chair college dean.

### 3. Using and Reporting Results:

A graduate reform committee considers the assessment results in evaluating and revising the requirements and curricula for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, and a graduate professionalization committee considers the results in planning and implementing professionalization activities for students in the programs. The department chair takes the results into consideration when scheduling and assigning graduate classes, and the DGS and ADGS use the results to improve their strategies for advising current students and for disseminating information about the M.A. and Ph.D. programs to current and prospective students. The DGS and ADGS are scheduled to submit a report on the program assessment findings and their applications to the department chair, college dean, and university provost on June 1, 2015.