

REPORT ON COMPLETED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Year 3 (2016-2017)

Outcome

1. Identify the PLO(s) your program assessed this academic year.
 - PLO #2: Students who complete the English Major will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key texts, authors, and historical development of Anglophone Literature.
 - PLO #5: Students who complete the English Major will be able to employ distinct critical perspectives in their independent ability to evaluate and interpret literary texts.

Process

2. Identify the artifact(s) (i.e. student work or outputs) that you used to assess the PLO [projects, exam questions, paper, student opinions, presentations, portfolios, specific assignments, capstone work].
 - PLO #2: We delivered the ETS Major Field Test for Literature in English in early December 2016 in order to receive some data about English PLO #2. Seven out of nine eligible ENLT Majors (those who completed Major Area requirement courses) took the exam and we received their scores.
 - PLO #5: Due to Department faculty members' difficulty in establishing how PLO #5 is different from PLO #4, an assessment activity/artifact for PLO #5 could not be developed/decided upon for the past two and a half years. This reality indicated a need to discuss this PLO as a full department.
3. Identify the instruments (e.g. rubrics, surveys, spreadsheets, statistical software, surveys) used to assess the artifact(s) (i.e. the way in which student output are analyzed).
 - PLO #2: A statistical analysis of our students' scores in the ETS Major Field Test for Literature in English was performed with the assistance of Mary Jane DiMattio and Val Taylor in the OEA and IRS offices on campus.
 - PLO #5: As stated earlier, due to the difficulty in establishing how PLO #5 is different from PLO #4, an assessment activity/artifact/instrument for PLO #5 could not be developed/decided upon.

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Findings

4. Describe program collaboration to plan, implement and use the results of assessment.

- PLO #2: Before even examining the specific results of the ETS Major Field Test, faculty posed four preliminary questions: 1) Are we to view these results as establishing a baseline since we have not assessed PLO #2 in recent history? 2a.) Can we compare our results with the results of other English programs who have had their students take this exam? 2b.) Of these other English programs who have used this exam, how many belong to peer and competitor institutions? 3) What other possible assessment methods exist for PLO #2 (as many faculty present were critical of standardized exams)? and 4) How does testing only 7 ENLT Majors provide a statistically relevant number?

In response to these questions, faculty decided to not use these results to establish a baseline but instead to move to an analysis of the ETS Major Field Test results (question 1). Faculty also decided to use the data that ETS sent of how our scores compared against the other 161 institutions, who have used this exam over the past five years, even though none of them are peer or competitor institutions (question 2). Next, faculty learned (from the first page of the ETS Major Field Test results) that none of the other 161 institutions who have used this exam have had less than 5 test takers, thus our program is aligned with all others. Plus, regardless of how few test takers there are, the results can still be used for internal quality improvement work for the English program (question 4). Finally, faculty put aside concerns about finding other assessment methods, as there was a desire to see what can be done with these results, and a larger issue of whether or not to keep PLO #2 as is in the English Program to be addressed before tackling the task of selecting/developing other assessment activities for PLO #2 (question 3).

Eventually, we discussed how the specific results of the ETS Major Field Test mapped against our Major Areas courses in the ENLT Major:

Test Categories	Test Scores	Major Areas
British Literature Pre-1660:	59%	B ¹
British Literature 1660-1900:	46%	B ²
American Literature to 1900:	64%	A ¹
British and American Literature 1901-1945:	57%	B ³ /A ²
Literature in English Since 1945:	57%	A ³ /G (PLO#3)
Literary History:	49%	n/a
Identification:	53%	n/a
Literary Theory:	44%	(PLO #4)

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The results of this ETS Major Field Test seem to indicate that of the Major Areas courses directly associated with PLO#2, we are weakest in the B² (46%) area, which makes sense as this is the area that has gone at least half covered since the retirement and non-replacement of our Victorianist, Ellen Casey, in 2009. Our first area of strength would be the A¹ area (64%), followed by good scores in B¹ area (59%) and B³/A² and A³ areas (57%). One conclusion we reached is that we need a 19th Century specialist who can teach theory (as the theory area received the lowest percentage of correct answers-44%).

However, Department members also examined and discussed the comparative data results provided by ETS, which matched our program's results against the other 161 institutions who have used this exam from 2011-2016. The Chair mentioned how the data showed (and this was confirmed by a visit to the Office of Educational Assessment) that our program's mean scores in the eight test categories were higher (even if only by a small margin) than the mean scores in the eight categories for the other 161 institutions who used this exam. This was a good point but the scores also showed how three of the top scores of our students strongly pulled up the lower scores of the remaining four students, meaning our higher than average mean scores were due to these three top scoring students. Consequently, the variability of student performance on this exam is another matter that can be addressed. Nevertheless, the Department focused further discussion on one central question: what does PLO #2 really assess about the English program, and is it something worthwhile for our students?

This question led to a prolonged and impassioned discussion about the Historical Model of the English Major, 3 areas in British and American Literature each, 6 required courses overall; this is what PLO #2 assesses. The discussion started with how the Historical Model was a popular structure for English Majors in the past, but is it a model that serves our current students best? This discussion led to the desire to begin a long-term project of discerning how the English Major may need to change, thereby requiring changes to our PLOs and the assessment activities attached to them. We began this endeavor by examining information about English Majors from our peer and competitor institutions in the May 2017 meeting. All of this is part of the closing-the-loop process for the assessment of PLO #2.

PLO #5: During Department meetings in the Spring 2017 semester, faculty discussed PLO #4 and #5 and did find considerable overlap between the two PLOs, which was confirmed by the overlap in courses connected most directly to PLOs #4 and #5. The Department then decided to delete PLO #5 and its objectives and edit PLO #4 and its

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objectives, so that it includes the one crucial point in PLO #5 that is not covered in any previous PLOs. The following is what was decided upon by the Department (*italics indicate revisions*):

New PLO #4: Students who complete the English Major will be able to apply different theoretical frameworks *and/or distinct critical perspectives* to literary texts in order to produce multiple readings and interpretations.

Objective A: Read and demonstrate knowledge of different theoretical frameworks *and/or distinct critical perspectives*

Objective B: Apply and integrate different theoretical frameworks *and/or distinct critical perspectives* into the analysis and interpretation of literary texts

Objective C: Incorporate different theoretical frameworks *and/or distinct critical perspectives* into written analyses and interpretations of literary texts

5. Where applicable, outline the steps you will take to make improvements to the program based on the results of assessment activities identified in #3.

- PLO #2: The discussion (initiated by the ETS Major Field Test scores) about how the current Historical Model for the English Major (the basis for PLO #2) may need to change in the future did begin in the May 2017 meeting and will continue over the next few academic years. Such a large change needs faculty collaboration and agreement, and should be done in consideration of evolving curriculum needs (level two of EP); the reality of faculty retirements and the likelihood of no replacement hires; and at least another cycle of quantitative and qualitative assessment data.
- PLO #5: This revision in PLOs should streamline the efforts and resources of the English Program and its faculty and thus make it more effective and productive in the long-term for our students. The true test of this revision will happen when faculty assess the new PLO #4.

6. Are there any new resources needed to create program improvements?

If so, please include the resources that you will request in the Budget section of the Annual Report.

- PLO #2: In the Annual Report for 2016-2017, the Department is requesting two tenure-track hires who would be pivotal to the curriculum needs of the English program. First, the Department is requesting a Victorian specialist capable of teaching cross-disciplinary courses (depending on specialty but two examples would be Environmental Literature

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or Literature and Medicine). Certification or evidence of digital humanities experience is desirable, as is interest in the First-Year Seminar and/or level two of EP (writing, oral, and digital literacy). If faculty decide to keep the Historical Model of the English Major, a Victorianist is essential, as shown by the ETS results; if faculty decide to not keep the Historical Model of the English Major, cross-disciplinary interests and courses would still benefit the Department.

Also, with the impending retirement of John M. Hill, the Department is requesting a Creative Writing specialist: one who teaches the analysis and writing of poetry. Another genre of interest could be fiction and/or applied writing courses. Certification or evidence of digital humanities experience is desirable, as is interest in the First-Year Seminar Program or level two of EP (writing, oral, and digital literacy). Such a faculty member can be instrumental in sustaining the General Education courses that the Department regularly offers and developing a long-overdue Writing Major for the Department and the University.

- PLO #5: Since PLO #5 has been deleted and its critical elements are now addressed in PLO #4, the next time faculty assess this new PLO #4 will be telling. For now, the only foreseeable resources needed would be the time, effort, and energy of faculty to design/decide upon an assessment activity/artifact and instrument of analysis that would allow for the accurate assessment of how theory *and/or* critical perspectives are implemented in student analyses of texts.

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