

<p style="text-align:center"><b>Department of English Assessment Yearly Report</b> <b>Graduate Component</b> <b>2006 - 2007</b></p>
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**I. Assessment Activities:**

**A. Program Goals:** The primary goals of the English MA program are to increase the student's knowledge of English and American Literature, to prepare students for more specialized courses of study at other graduate and professional schools, and to assure that the writing and literary analysis skills of students meet minimum professional standards. A five-hour comprehensive examination is given at or near the end of the candidate's course work. A minimum overall GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Students also have a thesis option in addition to the exam.

**B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection:** Twenty-two five-hour comprehensive program exams were administered during 2006-07.

**C. Results:** Six MA students received scores of Excellent; thirteen received scores of Pass; two students received Unsatisfactory (these students later retook the exam as per Graduate Catalog guidelines and received scores of Pass); and one student received a score of Pass with Contingency (later resolved to a score of Pass).

Additionally, the department accomplished the following in response to discussions about student assessment (see **Plans**, below) and a desire to embed assessment activities throughout student coursework:

- 1) developed assessment descriptors for departmental goals/outcomes deriving in part from the model provided by our undergraduate program;
- 2) updated those to reflect additions to departmental curricula (composition and rhetoric, linguistics) at the grad level;
- 3) developed a form for and asked faculty to add assessment commentary at the end of each semester when they submit grades for graduate students;
- 4) developed a form for and asked students to self-assess progress toward goals (related to Assessment Day)
- 5) developed a form for and collected assessment days surveys regarding the program in general;
- 6) asked departmental subcommittees to form and consider alternatives to current MA comprehensive exams for assessment;
- 7) discussed in the Curricula Committee (November 2007) alternatives to traditional comprehensive exams that the department may use both to assess

individual student performance/development and departmental support for those efforts.

**II. Plans:** We are still working on a set rotation of graduate-level courses so students can better plan their course of study, while still allowing the possibility of special topics courses at that level. We continue to examine the present graduate offerings and update/revise them as needed.

The department continues to evaluate the comprehensive exam in terms of its usefulness as an assessment tool and consider additional options. In response, a meeting of the department's graduate faculty was called. All agreed that exams are an important aspect of the MA, because they demonstrated a wide encounter with essential texts. The problem with the exams involves students negotiating the process of contacting professors and assembling lists by end of their second semester. To counter this problem, the following suggestions were offered:

- That students take an "exam" class in the Spring of their second year.
- Compiling a standardized list, though some felt the current system of three individual exams (each negotiated with a different professor) worked well. One professor noted that the department should have lists already ready (thus standardized by those faculty in that field) and easily available (i.e., to both students and faculty) in fields we have agreed on as legitimate fields to study. Within each list, students can still have choices (say students could pick 20 works from a list of say 50).
- That professors post (via the web) their policies as involves exams, thus facilitating the process of student-professor contact and access to sample lists.
- Making these lists publicly available and explaining their exact use and relationship to the exams/professors--i.e. that the lists are set but are working models and a student's final list needs to be negotiated with the examining professor.
- Other suggestions included reducing the reading list from 30 major texts to 20 major texts, perhaps finding a way to test for comprehensiveness of reading in addition to depth.
- One professor suggested eliminating the thesis, due to its ungainly length and lack of utility. Instead, students would draw upon their course work in the first year to compose two extended, publishable pieces (20-25 pages). These could then be submitted for publication and for writing examples for PhD programs. Provide a option of two 20-25 page essays appropriate for publication/submission to PhD programs.

**III. What has the department learned?** We continue to use the comprehensive examination as the MA assessment tool. Our Curriculum Committee is discussing how to better relate the MA Goals to the assessment rubric for the comprehensive exam; at present, the relationship is more implicit than explicit. Doing so would yield a more effective and more obvious manner of program assessment at the MA level. I note that the MA Goals actually seem better suited to assessing the MA thesis, which might also be a clue as to how to proceed in shaping the MA program assessment. The department's Curriculum Committee began a discussion in February 2006 about revising thesis evaluation rubrics. Based on Assessment Day feedback from MA students, our Curriculum Committee is also considering how to create graduate level courses, especially at the 600-level, that can create for us a set rotation. For instance, the conversation right now is focusing on whether it is best to create several distinct courses that would rotate—for instance, Arthurian Legends, Medieval Literature, etc.—versus creating umbrella titles that would allow for topics to be inserted more easily into set rotations, such as Topics in Medieval Literature, the focus of which would vary from offering to offering, while still allowing coverage and major areas of concentration.

Additionally, the department conducted assessment activities on Assessment Day:

All students taking assessment surveys met at 1:00 on April 4 in Corbly 467; before this meeting graduate students were asked to respond to an electronic mailing of the *attached graduate student evaluation sheet* to assess whether the classes they were taking help them fulfill the specified goals. Of 29 responses representing a range of classes, results unanimously affirmed that assignments and perspectives in the specified courses helped students achieve the noted goals.

Twelve graduate students completed and submitted the 2007 assessment survey (also attached); after the survey, five graduate students met with eight graduate faculty members in the department lounge for a follow-up discussion at 2:00. The discussion focused mainly on ways to both build community and to help with students' professional development opportunities and "create a culture of participation" in which graduate students were encouraged to share their work outside of single classrooms; however, participants tended to reject the idea of mandatory meetings or similar requisite events, citing other commitments including work and families; among other options electronic discussion boards, social occasions, and informal meetings like those sponsored by EGSA were proposed. Participants noted that not all graduate students are interested in further graduate study beyond the M. A. and that many of them have

entered our program with differing levels of preparation and engagement. Some faculty members noted that the difference between "the good and the not-so-good" graduate students stems more from initiative and drive than from particular talent. Students also questioned the traditional comprehensive exam format citing it as antithetical to much of the work that their classes ask them to do; they stressed that pedagogical methods should correspond to what students are asked to learn. To further the discussion on possible alternatives to current assessment methods (comprehensive exams and/or thesis), a graduate faculty meeting took place at 3:00, and subcommittees have formed based on faculty teaching concentrations to help consider options.

**Marshall University**  
**Assessment of Student Outcomes: Component/Course/Program Level**

**Component Area/Program/Discipline:** English / Graduate component 06-07

<b>Component / Course / Program Level</b>					
Student Outcome	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
<p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <p>1.1 In-depth knowledge of one major area of literary and writing study, chosen from designated historical periods; genres; elements of language study/linguistics; and/or literary and cultural theories.</p> <p>1.2 Familiarity with four additional designated literary periods, genres, elements of language study, and theories, beyond the major area.</p> <p>1.3 Competence in applying literary, language, and cultural theory, both in relation to and independent of particular literary periods and genres.</p>	<p>David Hatfield, Chair, English (ext. 66638); Dr. Katharine Rodier, Director of Graduate Studies (ext. 63128)</p>	<p>Currently, we assess MA students by administering a 5-hour comprehensive examination. Additionally, some students choose to write an MA thesis.</p>	<p>See Attached: Goals for the English Master of Arts Student (in progress) and M.A. Comprehensive Exam Evaluation Rubric.</p>	<p>During the assessment period, we administered 22 exams; 6 received scores of Excellent, 13 received scores of Pass, 2 received a score of Unsatisfactory; and 1 received a score of Pass with Contingency (later Pass)</p>	<p>Continue revision of the comprehensive exam evaluation rubric so it explicitly relates to the MA goals, making the rubric a likely tool for program assessment. Develop a specific evaluation rubric for MA theses.</p>

<p><b>Abilities</b></p> <p>2.1 Develop textual analysis in both writing and speaking.</p> <p>2.2 Utilize terms and methods of literary, language, and cultural theory as integrated aspects of the student's own analyses.</p> <p>2.3 Write thoroughly-researched, polished essays of substantial length which develop advanced and insightful critical arguments.</p> <p>2.4 Use professional research tools, showing accuracy in format, relevant, theoretical applications, and the ability to choose, introduce, provide background for, and evaluate peer-reviewed sources.</p>	<p>David Hatfield, Chair, English (ext. 66638); Dr. Katharine Rodier, Director of Graduate Studies (ext. 63128)</p>	<p>Currently, we assess MA students by administering a 5-hour comprehensive examination. Additionally, some students choose to write an MA thesis.</p>	<p>See Attached: Goals for the English Master of Arts Student (in progress) and M.A. Comprehensive Exam Evaluation Rubric.</p>	<p>During the assessment period, we administered 22 exams; 6 received scores of Excellent, 13 received scores of Pass, 2 received a score of Unsatisfactory; and 1 received a score of Pass with Contingency (later Pass)</p>	<p>Continue revision of the comprehensive exam evaluation rubric so it explicitly relates to the MA goals, making the rubric a likely tool for program assessment. Develop a specific evaluation rubric for MA theses.</p>
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## Graduate Student Evaluation

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course title and number: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester and year: \_\_\_\_\_

*Based on my observation, this student in the above course has demonstrated the following:*

- 1.1 Knowledge of the following areas of literary and writing study, which may include historical periods; genres; elements of language study/composition/linguistics/rhetoric/creative writing/professional writing; major authors; and/or literary/cultural/critical/analytical/language/composition or writing theory, as well as other subjects (please specify):

*I consider the student's demonstration of this knowledge to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

- 1.2 Competence in applying aspects of literary and critical/cultural/analytical theory, language theory; and/or composition or writing theory, both in relation to and independent of literary periods and genres (please specify):

*I consider the student's demonstration of this knowledge to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

- 1.3 Familiarity with a range of literary periods, genres, authors, elements of language/writing study, and related theories beyond those described above. Please specify:

*I consider the student's demonstration of this knowledge to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

**ABILITIES: This student has also demonstrated the ability to:**

2.1 Develop in both writing and speaking a sophisticated level of textual and critical analysis as above.

*I consider the student's demonstration of this ability to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

2.2 Utilize terms and methods of literary theory, language/writing theory, and/or cultural/critical/analytical theory as integrated aspects of the student's own analysis.

*I consider the student's demonstration of this ability to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

2.3 Write polished essays of substantial length that develop advanced and insightful critical arguments and that are thoroughly researched and properly documented, observing professional standards including MLA format.

*I consider the student's demonstration of this ability to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

2.4 Use professional research tools, showing accuracy in format, relevant theoretical applications, and the ability to choose, introduce, provide background for, and evaluate peer-reviewed sources.

*I consider the student's demonstration of this ability to be:*

Excellent

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

*Comment:*

**Overall comment** (you may attach another sheet if you wish):

**Instructor's signature / date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Graduate advisor's signature / date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date reviewed with student, if applicable:** \_\_\_\_\_