

**Marshall University Graduate College
Graduate Humanities Program**

Inter-Campus Transmittal

TO: Dr. Mary Beth Reynolds
Director of Assessment

FROM: Luke Eric Lassiter, Program Director

DATE: September 26, 2007

Mary Beth:

Please find attached the Humanities Program Assessment Yearly Report 2007.

Let me know should you have any questions.

**Humanities Program
Graduate Program Assessment
Yearly Report
October 01, 2007**

Submitted by

Luke Eric Lassiter, Program Director

Program Office

**Marshall University Graduate College
South Charleston, WV
304-746-1923 / 2022**

I. Assessment Activities

A. Program Goals (M.A. in Humanities)

The Graduate Humanities Program, an interdisciplinary M.A. degree program that permits students to develop individualized plans of study, established four program goals in the initial assessment plan. These foundational goals reflect the nature of the program itself to

1. graduate students who have experienced interdisciplinary study in the humanities (core courses focused on interdisciplinary study and study in two different discipline areas);
2. graduate students who have completed a coherent plan of study (a plan that may emphasize one disciplinary area but will incorporate appropriate classes from other disciplines);
3. graduate students who have demonstrated competence in an area of specialization (arts and society, cultural studies, historical studies, or literary studies); and
4. graduate students who have demonstrated competence in research activities emphasizing more than one discipline.

These goals are articulated via several learning outcomes, discussed in the following section.

B. Learning Outcomes and Data Collection

Providing students with an integrated and interdisciplinary perspective on human inquiry, the program should enhance the graduate's ability to deal critically and flexibly with intellectual, social, political, historical, literary, or artistic issues through a broad humanistic perspective. By the time a student graduates from the Graduate Humanities Program, then, faculty expect students to exhibit *high-order critical thinking skills, a sensitivity and articulation of interdisciplinary knowledge and concepts, an understanding of the wide range of study made possible by the humanities, an appreciation for how the humanities informs larger concepts of human diversity and multiculturalism, and finally, an apprehension of the broader applications of humanities-based knowledge.*

The Program now collects data for assessing these outcomes at five different points:

1. Admissions to Program

Students seeking a Master of Arts in Humanities must meet the following requirements: (1) a score of 450 or above (40%) on the verbal section of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test or an equivalent score on the Miller Analogies Test (MAT); (2) an undergraduate major in the humanities (broadly defined, including fields such as philosophy, history, English, religious studies, folklore, anthropology, archaeology, classics, the arts, modern languages, and communication studies); and an overall undergraduate grade point average of 3.0; and (3) write a brief essay that explains the degree goals and the reasons for selecting the Humanities Program. Data on student progress is initiated upon admission and maintained throughout their tenure in the Program.

2. Plan of Study Meetings

Each student must meet with the Program Director several times during their tenure in the Graduate Humanities Program. During these meetings, in addition to developing the student's Plan of Study, students are informally interviewed about their progress in the program and whether learning outcomes are being met.

3. Comprehensive Examination

Prior to taking the comprehensive exam, a candidate must have completed 24 hours of course work, including all core classes, and have a 3.0 grade point average. Three examiners construct the comprehensive examination for the student based on the individual plan of study. The comprehensive exam focuses on two core areas and the area of emphasis. The student must pass the examination before progressing to the final research project. In addition to the learning outcomes identified above, further outcomes being measured include *the ability to analyze texts and images from more than one particular perspective, knowledge of research methods/critical issues in two core areas, knowledge of major figures/issues in area of emphasis, written proficiency, and technological competence.*

4. Research Assignment (thesis or project)

In addition to the learning outcomes outlined above, outcomes being measured at this stage (compiled by the thesis committee or project mentor) include *production of an appropriate piece of research, one that begins with formulating an interdisciplinary research question; written and oral proficiency (product and presentation of research in symposium or thesis defense); and technological competence in carrying out research and producing the document.*

5. Exit Surveys

Soon after graduation, each student is asked to fill out an exit survey, a survey used to assess the learning outcomes listed above. This data is compiled and maintained by the Project Director.

The following chart summarizes the Program's assessment efforts.

Graduate Humanities Program Assessment Summary

| Learning Outcomes | Persons Responsible | Assessment Tools | Standards/Benchmarks | Results/Analysis | Action Taken |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Graduates of the Humanities Program are expected to exhibit:</p> <p><i>high-order critical thinking skills; a sensitivity and articulation of interdisciplinary knowledge and concepts; an understanding of the wide range of study made possible by the humanities; an appreciation for how the humanities informs larger concepts of human diversity and multiculturalism; and finally,</i></p> | <p>Graduate Humanities Program Director and Program Faculty</p> | <p>Admission into Program data collection; Plan of Study meetings (interviews); Comprehension Exams (knowledge and skill assessment); Thesis and/or Project (Independent Research Symposium) and Exit Surveys</p> | <p>All graduates are expected to pass complete coursework, pass comprehensive exams, and complete the final thesis/project within 7 years.</p> <p>Comprehensive exams should exhibit the ability to analyze texts and images from more than one particular perspective, knowledge of research methods/critical issues in two core areas, knowledge of major figures/issues in area of emphasis, written proficiency, and technological competence.</p> <p>The final project/thesis must reach a standard of production of an appropriate piece of research, one that begins with formulating an interdisciplinary research question; written and oral proficiency (product and presentation of research in symposium or thesis defense); and technological competence in carrying out research and producing the document.</p> | <p>Analysis of comprehensive exams suggests that while most students are often well-prepared for this assessment, in a few cases, students must re-take their exams. From 2002 to the present, for example, 64% of students passed the comprehensive exams the first time; 32% had to re-write one section; and 4% had to re-write two sections a second time. The percentage of students having to take the exam more than once has remained about the same over the past few years, suggesting that individualized instruction on the <i>articulation of interdisciplinary knowledge and concepts</i> should be addressed more carefully before students take the exam either in the classroom or via independent faculty-student meetings.</p> <p>Analysis of the final project/thesis suggests that the majority of students who complete their coursework in a timely manner also complete the final thesis or research project. Since 2002, 73% of these students have completed research projects and 27% have completed theses, with an average of 3.5 years to complete the program. Exit surveys and interviews conducted during Plan of Study meetings suggest that many students shift from the thesis to the project option (since 2002, 14% have done so), or choose the project option outright because the Program does not have enough full-time faculty (the Program Director is the only FT faculty) to serve as advisors for all thesis topics (only FT faculty can serve as thesis advisors; the many PT faculty who serve in the program</p> | <p>Program faculty are now discussing ways to implement more focused preparations for student comprehensive exams and for the <i>articulation of interdisciplinary knowledge and concepts</i> via classroom instruction and independent faculty-student meetings prior to the exam.</p> <p>The Program continues to provide students with varied and creative options for student work to be carried out for the project option; however, the Program also continues to seek monies externally, and seek other opportunities within COLA (e.g., the Program Director has requested a new position every year since arriving in 2005) and between and among colleges to secure the participation of more FT faculty willing to direct theses.</p> |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p><i>an apprehension of the broader applications of humanities-based knowledge.</i></p> | <p>Graduate Humanities Program Director and Program Faculty</p> | <p>Exit Surveys and Plan of Study meetings (interviews)</p> | <p>All students should have the option to develop study in public/applied humanities.</p> | <p>cannot serve in this role). While the Program has no doubt that the Research Project offers students the opportunity to engage in <i>high-order critical thinking skills</i>, the more limited opportunity of the thesis option clearly presents an obstacle for some students to achieve the fullest articulation of this end.</p> <p>Exit surveys and interviews conducted during Plan of Study meetings indicate that students continue to be extremely satisfied with the Program and are achieving the program goals and most if not all the learning outcomes. Many students, however, continue to express interest in developing more applied curriculum and more instruction on <i>apprehension of the broader applications of humanities-based knowledge</i>.</p> | <p>The Program continues to develop its Public Humanities Project, including developing new curriculum in applied humanities, obtaining monies to provide students with opportunities for applied work in humanities settings, and other programs and initiatives (e.g., the Glenwood Project).</p> |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

D. Post-Graduate Measures Monitored:

Although we do not promote the M.A. in Humanities as a degree leading to particular employment, two common measures of a program's success are being tracked:

1. The ability of graduates to compete for places in doctoral programs, and
2. The ability of graduates to secure employment.

In terms of the twenty-two graduates examined from 2002 to the present, the Humanities Program notes the following:

- Ten of the eighteen graduates were employed full time during their time as a graduate student; nine of the ten continue to be employed in the same positions.
- Two graduates took full-time work during graduate study and are still employed.
- Securing the degree allowed four to gain full-time teaching positions at the college level.
- Five graduates have only part-time employment.
- Three graduates with full-time employment have begun teaching part-time at the college level as the result of their earned degrees.

II. Feedback Loop & Plans for the current year (2007-2008):

Faculty will continue to monitor the assessment plan currently in place, and seek to put into practice those actions as emergent from the assessment lined out in the chart on Page 3-4. As they have in the past, the Program Director and the Program Faculty will meet during Assessment Day in the Spring to determine the best ways to implement these findings into classroom instruction, advising, and individualized work with students via the Research Project and/or Thesis. In addition, the Program continues to administer an in-depth survey of all graduates since the program was established in 1979 (then under the auspices of the West Virginia Graduate College).

III. Assistance Needed:

None at present.

IV. What was learned?

As reported in 2006, the Humanities Program is a small graduate program, and most students are able to complete the degree within the seven years allowed. Graduates do find employment following the degree. As lined out in the chart on Page 3, the Program will continue to implement new opportunities for students in the area of public/applied humanities, develop more focused preparations for student comprehensive exams, and seek creative ways to provide students with increased opportunities for the Program's thesis option.