

I. Mission

To provide the College of Liberal Arts & Marshall University with some of the core components of a liberal education by means of the Humanities Major with concentrations in Classic, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. A university education lacking any of these three disciplines would amount to something less than what a traditional genuine education essentially is. A Marshall University education serves the citizens of West Virginia with the inclusion of multiple offerings from these three essential disciplines of study. In keeping with the mission of our College of Liberal Arts we provide students with a progressive liberal arts education that enhances their ability to think clearly, critically, and independently on the fundamental issues characteristic of what it means to be a human being.

II. Program's Student Learning Outcomes

- A. **Program Goals/Learning Outcomes:** The Humanities Assessment Plan provides for an evaluation of teaching and learning according to areas of fundamental knowledge and abilities/skills which Humanities majors need to demonstrate at the point of their graduation. These areas of fundamental knowledge and abilities/skills, common to the program, have been expanded to explain in addition the knowledge and skills in each particular option (Classics, Philosophy, Religious Studies) that graduates must demonstrate. Similarly faculty goals have been developed for the program and for individual disciplines. These goals have been in place now for eleven years and were evaluated in fall 2008 as part of our program review. In fall 2005, however, we reorganized our goals by kinds of skills and made minor changes to them. Evaluations of students in this update continue to be based on these revised goals:

I. Rhetorical Skills:

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1. the ability to interpret thinking and texts with attention to important literary elements.
 2. the ability to create oral and written discourse with attention to topic, development, argument, counterargument, validity, and critical perspective.

II. Critical Thinking Skills:

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3. the ability to analyze texts written from different perspectives and for different purposes.
 4. the skills of exploring and fairly comparing evidence and reasoning for conflicting viewpoints.
 5. the ability to re-examine a critical position from multiple and sometimes competing perspectives.

III. Informed Openness to Multiple Perspectives

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6. the ability to define any thinking or text as a product of human beings and as a window to the nature of its human author(s) and audience(s).
 7. the ability to imagine any thinking or text as an insight into the world.
 8. the skills of openness to different personal and cultural viewpoints within the context of a multicultural world.

IV. Field-Specific Research Skills

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9. the ability to write and speak effectively from a humanities perspective or from perspectives for different purposes and different audiences.
 10. the ability to use professional humanities (disciplinary) research tools.

BOT Initiative 3 Compliance: Since this program is unique nationally, no national standards exist which might provide quantifiable evidence that graduates are meeting appropriate standards. In the core courses of the program (CL/PHL/RST 250, 390-394, and 490-494), the definitions of skill rating which appear at the end of this update provide the standard from which we are working. Faculty this fall have continued the process of targeting three outcomes per year for careful and intense scrutiny and have created clear and detailed guidelines for judging the categories of excellent, competent, and deficient.

Learning Outcomes/Data Collection: During AY 2010 - 2011, five faculty members taught three separate team-taught courses at the 400 level (CL/RST 492 *Purity, Pollution, Power* in fall 2010; PHL/RST 493 *Logic, Sense, and Non-sense*, and CL/PHL 494 *Love, Madness and Inspiration* in spring 2011), and these courses provided this year's opportunity to put into practice the testing of the skills of undergraduate majors and graduating seniors in Humanities. A total of 35 majors were evaluated in the three courses (15 students completed the fall course, and 10 students completed each one of the spring courses). During the fall of 2004, the Humanities faculty decided to begin careful and thorough assessment of only three or four of our ten goals every year so that in any given three-year period we will have evaluated all ten of our goals. The goals for AY 2010 - 2012 are 1, 5, and 7 (see chart in C below).

III. Assessment Activities

A. **Assessment Measures:** Student presentations, discussions, writing assignments, and final papers

Sample:

CL/PHL 494 Oral Presentation Guidelines

Due: Week of February 28.

The Assignment.

Working in groups (below) you will prepare a fifteen minute presentation that explores how your texts connect or disconnect with the writings of Plato. You will focus your discussion by considering: **a) your interpretation of the texts with attention to important literary elements; b) your ability to examine these texts from the point of view of Classics and Philosophy; and c) your ability to imagine yours texts as insights into the world.** Keep in mind that all differences between poetry and philosophy notwithstanding, both of them depend on and are rooted in language/human beings as the animal with logos. Presumably, then, inspiration and love never escape from the shadow of language, even when instantiated in the most "divinely" and/or "erotically" tuned context.

1. The Process

After reading our texts, prepare an outline of the presentation (your choice as to how you outline) that you will give to us. If you want to distribute the outline or any other handout to the rest of the class, please send them to us by the morning of the class so that we can print them. The presentation will be no longer than fifteen minutes. We will stop you if you go over! You are expected to work together on this, i.e. to have meetings outside of class to prepare your work. To facilitate the process, we will establish discussion boards on WEBCT where you can discuss points, make plans to meet etc. EVERYONE is expected to work fully on this project! If you find that one member of the group is not pulling his/her weight throughout the process, you can remove him/her from the group and that person will not receive a grade. Also, at the end, you will be asked to evaluate each other.

2. We will evaluate you on the following:

- a. Your ability to work together to present a wholly integrated presentation. (40%, including student evaluations).
- b. Your ability to analyze these texts from the points of view expressed above. (60%).

B. **Benchmarks:** Written grading criteria for oral and written projects which represent abilities/skills

Another sample:

CL/PHL 494

Paper Guidelines

Spring 2011

Topic: Write a detailed and well-developed essay on one or more aspects of love, inspiration and/or madness drawn from both literary and philosophical texts. The topic is subject to instructor's approval. It must be considered from the points of view of philosophy and literature, which includes literary elements, and must consider that the texts are written from different perspectives and for different purposes; that they represent an insight in the Greek world as well as our own; and that, fundamentally, they are humanities texts.

The essay should have a well-defined thesis supported by subtopics that interweave the texts you have chosen, and a conclusion that does not repeat what you have said but takes the reader in a different direction. Please do not submit topics you have written for other courses! This essay needs to be specific to the themes of this course (for which, please see the syllabus).

Format: The essay should be no fewer than ten and no more than fifteen pages in length, typed, double-spaced. References should be cited by name and text numbers (e.g. *Ion* 474B). The essay should be free of typographical, spelling and grammatical errors. We will stop reading the essay after the third such error. Please do not use outside sources for this essay, but rather, enjoin your capacity for critical thinking, imagination, and understanding. Articles we have read in class are acceptable.

Deadlines: Please submit in class on March 28 two copies of a one page proposal, with references to specific passages or poems that you will be using. The rough draft due to both teachers on April 11. Class presentations will be the week of April 25. Final draft is due to both teachers on Tuesday, May 2 at 12:45 p.m. Failure to meet these deadlines will result in a grade of zero for the essay.

- C. **Results/Analysis:** Our assessment results show similar strengths and weaknesses to the one last year (our second post five year review assessment update). What the faculty decided four years ago (to make the development of strong lines of argument and counterarguments a designated objective in all classes taught by the three departments that are outside of the interdisciplinary, team-taught courses and feed into them) continues to be in play. The following table shows the evaluation of students in the three team-taught courses this past year on goals 1, 5, and 7. Note that the designations "excellent, competent, deficient" are explained at the end of this update.

OUTCOME	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT	BENCHMARK	EVALUATION	CONCLUSION/ACTION
1. The ability to interpret thinking and texts with attention to important literary elements	Teaching to and testing by means of clearly stated, written assignment guidelines for both written and oral projects	Written grading criteria for oral and written projects which represent abilities/skills.	In the 492 course (15 students); and in the 493 course (10 students) this goal did not apply. In the 494 course (10 students) in oral presentations, about 80% performed in the excellent, 20% in the competent, and none in the deficient range.	Humanities faculty resolved to reaffirm this objective and to focus special attention on meeting this objective in a fuller way in future courses.

<p>5. the ability to re-examine a critical position from multiple and sometimes competing perspectives</p>	<p>Teaching to and testing by means of clearly stated, written assignment guidelines for both written and oral projects</p>	<p>Written grading criteria for oral and written projects which represent abilities/skills</p>	<p>In the 492 course, 40% performed in the excellent, 50% in the competent, with 10% also in the deficient. In the 493 course, 20% performed in the excellent, 70% in the competent range, and 10% in deficient category. In the 494 course, 80% performed in the excellent, 20% in the competent range, none were deficient.</p>	<p>Humanities faculty noted that there is clearly room for improvement, and resolved that continuing strong teaching toward this objective would enhance the number of students performing at the excellent level.</p>
<p>7. the ability to imagine any thinking or text as an insight into the world</p>	<p>Teaching to and testing by means of clearly stated, written assignment guidelines for both written and oral projects</p>	<p>Written grading criteria for oral and written projects which represent abilities/skills</p>	<p>In 492 course, 50% performed in the excellent, with 50% in the competent, and no one was deficient. In the 493 course, 60% performed in the excellent, 40% in the competent, and no one was deficient. In the 494 course, 80% performed in the excellent, 20% in the competent, and no one was deficient.</p>	<p>Imaginative as well as critical thinking is a crucial component in this goal. Consequently, faculty resolved (a) to this more an objective in those courses that are outside the interdisciplinary, team-taught courses and feed into them and (b) to focus special attention on meeting this objective in these courses.</p>

D. Analysis/Planned Action:

- Clearly outcomes 1, 5, and 7 continue to need attention in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses, and the program needs to focus on creating assignments that teach and test these three outcomes.
- Also the program can be content that it is doing a solid job teaching toward outcome 7, for most students in all three courses excelled in this area.
- In 492 and 493, outcome 1 was not evaluated due to the kind of texts used in the courses. In 494, 80% of students scored excellent or better on outcome 1. Consequently the faculty resolved to remain aware when planning seminars that there might need to be some increased emphasis on outcome 1. However since all three depts. do teach literature classes (the main focus of this outcome), and some seminars do include this element, this lack of applicability may be an anomaly, e.g., all of the previous year's seminars did include literary elements but outcome 1 was not tested that year; yet in the year that the outcome was assessed, only one seminar addressed the issue. This may suggest a change in when and under which circumstances we might assess any particular outcome.
- Even though outcome 5 shows the area of greatest need, it was still the case that students performed strongly in this area. It is also the most intellectually demanding of the outcomes, so some needs in this area are to be expected.

Plans for the current year: The Humanities faculty continue to implement the changes we instituted fall 2004 with some additions: 1) the faculty will assess only three to four of the ten outcomes per year, anticipating that this focusing of attention on three instead of the entire ten will allow a more careful and more in-depth testing

and evaluation of students and greater knowledge about students who perform in a deficient manner; 2) the full faculty will examine carefully the results of these assessments of three to four outcomes at meetings to be held at the beginning of each semester; in this way, changes in teaching and evaluation of students can be made twice every academic year; 3) the faculty continue to use detailed guidelines for evaluating students as excellent, competent, and deficient, and these guidelines appear at the end of this report; 4) the faculty have designated outcomes 2, 4, and 8 as the three which will be the focus of careful evaluation of student performance within the team-taught courses offered this AY, 2011-2012; 5) the faculty decided to make the development of the literary elements of texts a designated objective in all classes that form part of the Humanities major; 6) faculty plan a meeting in February 2012 to revise and consolidate our assessment objectives, especially in view of the new core curriculum; 7) the faculty agreed that assessment of student completion of degree objectives in the interdisciplinary courses should include experimentation with methodologies that will lead to better evaluation of student progress; and 8) the faculty will re-visit the “portfolio” method for future senior evaluations.

IV. Overview of changes implemented in the program this past year based on results and planned action specified in last year’s report.

The faculty continue to consider the assessment options that appear below and how they might benefit our assessment program. At present we are only involved in assessing student work in the first context listed here:

In each course we specify criteria by which to evaluate performance on the relevant assessment outcomes. There may be several criteria for each outcome. We specify deficient, competent, or excellent performance for each criterion, for each student on each assignment.

We check for trends with respect to these criteria in three contexts:

- 1) within each course, over several assignments
- 2) between different, simultaneous courses dealing with the same assessment outcomes
- 3) between different, consecutive courses, dealing with the same assessment outcomes.

Contexts (2) and (3) allow us to identify not only outcome trends for classes as a whole, but also performance trends and type for individual students. Context (1) is not sufficient to conclude concerning individual students, since there are too many possible interfering variables in each individual case to control for, given the limitations on the data it is possible to collect on individuals’ motivations and current life circumstances.

Having established trends, we are then in a position either to endorse our current teaching strategies, or to design strategies and assignments to focus on the weak areas the trends have shown. Then, in addition to evaluating the new year’s set of outcomes, we also repeat evaluations of those of the previous year’s criteria that were evaluated as unsatisfactory, in order to assess whether we have succeeded in improving the unsatisfactory trends.

V. Specify changes/modifications made based specifically on data obtained during Assessment Day Activities

What one most important thing has the program learned through this process? Faculty continue to be committed to the emphasis of one important writing and critical thinking skill in all those classes which can possibly feed into the team-taught, interdisciplinary courses (including capstones). This decision affects teaching and learning in the entire major.

VI. Assistance Needed: It would be helpful to have a discussion or workshop on how to make effective use of assessment results in the revision of curricula and individual courses in curricula, especially if information is available about how other programs have achieved this kind of revision.

[To explain results in C above:]

Definitions for Student Outcomes Assessments in Team-Taught Courses of the MU Humanities Program

A. Purposes of Definitions:

- to indicate and explain parameters of each assessment
- to make the relationship between Student Outcomes assessments and student grades on individual assignments and in courses clear

B. Definitions

1. **Competent** (likely to be the assessment for most students who make As and Bs, and sometimes those who make Cs, in our classes):

- Student meets expectations for success in undergraduate course work in *critical thinking skills, area knowledge, and application*

Skills

- Student acquires a basic **skills set**, such as for research, reasoning, or composition; *and*
- Student demonstrates these in written and oral assignments
- *Assessment techniques:* writing, presentation, class discussion

Example: a student uses the library to do independent research on a humanities topic set by the instructor, and then communicates that research in a written essay, or by formal oral presentation.

Area Knowledge

- Student acquires competence in **area knowledge (a data set)**, e.g. the specifics of ancient Greek theater practice, or 20th century American Christianity
- Student acquires **disciplinary knowledge**, such as intellectual vocabulary and area-specific terminology and methodology.
- *Assessment techniques:* writing, presentation, class discussion, and objective quizzes/exams

Application

- Student is aware of the correct application of skills sets and/or knowledge areas, not just for one assignment but as a general (replicable) method of work, analysis, or critical thinking.
- *Assessment techniques:* methods for skills sets and area knowledge, with results compared across all major assignments for the course

Summary: Student succeeds at being a “student of a particular discipline,” and is prepared for further study, in the opinion of the instructors. “Competent” students (although prepared) may or may not be successful at advanced study.

2. **Excellent** (likely to be seldom used, and to be almost exclusively associated with “A” students)

- Student meets *and exceeds* expectations for success in undergraduate course work in *skills, area knowledge, and application* as outlined above
- Student demonstrates original or creative use of skills
- Student shows extraordinary sensitivity to the broader applications of skills, knowledge, and analysis
- Student can work independently
- *Assessment techniques:* writing (especially longer papers and research projects that involve written presentation), spoken presentation, class discussion, objective quizzes/exams

Example: A student reads additional materials outside of course assignments regularly, seeks out additional (discipline oriented) contact time with professors, or adds insights that are not simply a reflection of the professors' lecturing or course materials

Summary: student performs as a "junior colleague in a particular discipline," and is likely to succeed in advanced (graduate) studies and enjoy post-graduate professional success in the particular discipline, in the opinion of the instructors.

3. Deficient (most likely to be the assessment of students who receive a grade of D or F for the course, and for some students who receive a grade of C)

- Student cannot effectively demonstrate *skills sets* and *area knowledge*, or
- Student is not fully aware of the correct *application* of the skill sets and/or knowledge areas (cannot apply area knowledge or skills independently)
- *Assessment techniques:* written and oral assignments; objective exams/essays

Example: A student succeeds in a particular assignment or presentation, but cannot transfer performance to other assignments, presentations, or circumstances of work, analysis, or thinking in humanities.

Summary: Student is unsuccessful at mastering disciplinary skills and knowledge.

C. Note on Correlation Between Outcomes and Grades

Course grades do not **directly** reflect student outcomes. A student designated as "deficient" in a particular skill or knowledge set may or may not be highly successful in other skills sets. Thus, a student may attain a high grade (B or A) on a particular assignment (or even several assignments) and still be judged as deficient. Alternatively, a student may be a poor performer on certain assignments but receive a "competent" designation in a particular skill or knowledge set because of performance over the course of several assignments.