

Department of English Request for Financial Support for Assessment Activities AY 2005-06

University Mission:

Wichita State University is committed to providing comprehensive educational opportunities in an urban setting. Through teaching, scholarship, and public service, the University seeks to equip both students and the larger community with the educational and cultural tools they need to thrive in a complex world, and to achieve both individual responsibility in their own lives and effective citizenship in the local, national, and global community.

Program Mission:

The English Department offers a broad and flexible program of courses that are central to a liberal arts education while offering students the opportunity for personal enrichment and a variety of career possibilities. The department offers degree programs in creative writing, literature, and English teaching, as well as a range of courses in linguistics.

Students who combine an English major with substantial work in other disciplines will find the knowledge and communication skills acquired in their work in English a valuable asset as they seek entrance into a wide range of fields that include communications, education, government, law, and business.

Program/Goals and Objectives

Goal #1:

Students will acquire a functional vocabulary and critical terms with which to conduct literary study.

Objective #1

Students will be able to identify and distinguish among genres and sub-genres (e.g. Poetry: lyric or epic poetry? Fiction: novel or short story?) and discuss their basic characteristics using appropriate terminology (e.g., particular verse forms in poetry, basic elements of fiction such as plot, character, setting, point of view, etc.).

Objective #2

Students will be able to identify and discuss, in appropriate terms, strategies that writers use, including various types of structure (in fiction, for instance, narrative or dramatized form) and different types of figurative language (simile, metaphor, symbol, etc.), in their efforts to manipulate the responses of readers.

- to make critical and interpretive arguments by developing critical thinking and analytic skills
- to write clear, coherent, and persuasive essays

Goal #2:

Students will be able to discuss literary texts perceptively, both with regard to the internal characteristics of a text, and with regard to the external relationships of the text to systems of value, culture, history, etc.

Objective #1

Students will be able to read and discuss literary texts—even ones with which they are unfamiliar—in terms of plot, setting, characterization, style, using the appropriate vocabulary.

Objective #2

Students will be able to recognize the way in which a particular literary text reflects the preoccupations—literary, psychological, social, political, etc.—of the author who wrote it and the age at which it was written.

Goal #3:

Students will develop the ability to write appropriately sophisticated essays on literary topics, presenting carefully organized theses with convincing support and appropriate research.

Objective #1

Students will be able to write essays that express a clear thesis about a literary work, defending that thesis through the selection of appropriate details from that work.

Objective #2

In this process, students will be able to select and use pertinent quotations from a work and, where necessary, paraphrase passages from the work on which they are writing.

Learner Outcomes:

Knowledge

The English major aims to increase students' familiarity with:

- literary terms, forms, and genres;
- critical and interpretive methods
- principles of composition and bibliographic reference

Skills:

The English major aims to improve students' ability in the following areas:

- **Organization.** An excellent essay has an organization which “supports the central idea (thesis). The order and structure move the reader through the text easily.” With an interesting introduction, satisfying conclusion, effective transitions, and natural and appropriate paragraphing.
- **Sentence fluency and sophistication.** An excellent essay is written with sentences varied in structure and length according to a pattern which clearly connects the form with the content.
- **Command of grammar and punctuation conventions.** An excellent essay uses a wide range of standard writing conventions.

Assessment of program goals (Method/frequency/who does it)

For Basic Skills Courses

English 101

1. Exit exams will be assessed for writing quality. Each exam will be assessed for quality by the student's instructor and by a second reader assigned at random by the department. Grades given on the exam (awarded according to the department's standard writing rubric, which runs for the Exit Exam on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 for the best writing) will be tabulated to fit three categories: Inadequate, which is a grade of 1 or 2; Adequate, which is a grade of 3 or 4; Exceeds Expectations, which is a grade of 5.
2. An objective test of writing skills will be given students twice during the term—early and late--and the test will be assessed in the same three categories using a similar scale so that students earning D plus and below are judged to have Inadequate skills, students earning a C minus to B plus are judged to have Adequate skills, and students earning above an A minus are said to Exceed Expectations.
3. Students will be surveyed on their perceptions of what they learned in the course. (Surveying to begin in 2006-2007.)

English 102

1. Exit exams will be assessed for writing quality. Each exam will be assessed for quality by the student's instructor and by a second reader assigned at random by the department. Grades given on the exam (awarded according to the department's standard writing rubric, which runs for the Exit Exam on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 for the best writing) will be tabulated to fit three categories: Inadequate, which is a grade of 1 or 2; Adequate, which is a grade of 3 or 4; Exceeds Expectations, which is a grade of 5.
2. Research papers will be assessed for writing quality. Grades given on the research paper (awarded according to the department's standard writing rubric) will be tabulated to fit three categories: Inadequate; Adequate; Exceeds Expectations, again using the 5 point scale with grades tabulated as described above.
3. Research papers will be assessed for research skills. A newly-invented rubric gauging research skills will be applied to half the research papers submitted in English 102. Grades given on the exam will be tabulated to fit three categories: Inadequate; Adequate; Exceeds Expectations, again using the 5 point scale with grades tabulated as described above.

Assessment of program goals (Method/frequency/who does it)
For English Major Courses

Method #1

While many other Kansas universities require their English majors to take a single Introduction to Literature course, at Wichita State University, English majors take courses in the separate genres. Since all English majors take English 310, the Nature of Poetry, and most take English 330, the Nature of Fiction, research papers written by students in these courses will be assessed according to the department's grading rubric described above. This rubric rates writing along the exact same lines as the Exit Exam rubric, with the only difference being that on the literature essays the scale runs from 1 to 10, with 10 going to the best writing. These will be papers written out-of-class and graded by the course instructor, who is the best judge of the student's competence in both course content and writing ability. Grades given on the exam will be tabulated to fit three categories: Inadequate, which is a grade of 6 and below; Adequate, which is a grade of 7 or 8; Exceeds Expectations, which is a grade of 9 or 10.

In terms of Program Goals, evaluating the essay for these four traits—understanding of course content; organization of ideas; sentence fluency and sophistication; and adherence to grammar and punctuation conventions—will gauge whether the student is able to write appropriately sophisticated essays on literary topics, presenting carefully organized theses with convincing support and appropriate research. In terms of Learner Outcomes, evaluating the essays for these traits will assess the skills of our students.

Method #2: Survey of alumni five years after graduation. The English Department needs to develop such a survey, which would be first conducted in April 2007.

Method #3: Exit interviews with graduating seniors conducted by graduate students. Again, the English Department needs to develop this survey, or list of interview questions, which would be first conducted in April 2008.

As indicated above, the English Department would rotate assessment methods on a three-year schedule: Literature final exams in April 2006, exit interviews in April 2007, and alumni surveys in April 2008, and so on.

Assessment of Learner Outcomes:

An answer key will be used to assess student performance on the objective writing test given twice during the semester to English 101 students.

The English Department's standard grading rubric will be used to assess student performance on English 101 exit exams, English 102 exit exams, English 102 research papers, English 310 research papers, and English 330 research papers, and a newly-invented rubric will be used to assess the quality of research in English 102 research papers.

Results:

To be announced.

Feedback Loop:

Results of assessment of English 101 and 102 (Basic Skills Courses) will be considered by the department's Composition Committee, which will pass on any recommendations to the department's Policy Committee. Results of assessment of English 310 and 330 (Nature of Poetry and Nature of Fiction) will be considered by the department's Undergraduate Committee, which will pass on any recommendations to the department's Policy Committee.