

English MA

Communication With Students

Goal Description:

The MA Director utilizes various modes of communication to ensure that students are on track in the program.

Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Advising

Performance Objective Description:

Instituting an advising program so that each student must first be advised by the MA Director in order to register for classes.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Advising

KPI Description:

Each MA student was advised before registering for classes. In order to be advised, students must submit a completed advising form upon which they list the courses that they have taken. The goal of this process is that the student begins to take ownership of their degree without **solely** relying upon the MA Director, Department Administration, the Chair of the Department and/or Degree works.

Each MA student was advised for the summer 2022 and fall 2022 semesters.

Target Description:

All MA students have done pre-registration advising with the MA Director for the spring 23 semester.

Results Description:

The majority of MA students have done pre-registration advising with the MA Director for the spring 23 semester. There are a few students who still need to be advised, but for various reasons, have been delayed.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Student Writing Remediation

KPI Description:

The MA Director meets with graduate student who did not pass the assessment exam in order to prepare them to write better to satisfy English disciplinary graduate writing requirements.

Target Description:

The MA Director meets with graduate student who did not pass the assessment exam in order to prepare them to write better to satisfy English disciplinary graduate writing requirements.

Results Description:

The MA Director meets with graduate student who did not pass the assessment exam in order to prepare them to write better to satisfy English disciplinary graduate writing requirements.

Goal I: Critical Thinking in Literary Studies

Goal Description:

The English MA program at Sam Houston State University has three defined goals, all of which share the common aim of preparing graduates as scholars, teachers, professional writers and researchers, and advocates for the Humanities. While the number of graduates who have entered PhD programs or taken teaching positions in area high schools or at two- and four-year colleges is an objective measure of our success in accomplishing this goal, not all of our students pursue further graduate degrees or secondary/post-secondary teaching. With that in mind, the MA faculty has determined three measurable learning objectives that apply uniformly to all MA students in English from Sam Houston State University:

(1) Demonstrate the ability to think theoretically and critically about language and literature, including the ability to apply research methods and critical theories reflective of the current state of scholarship.

To think theoretically and critically about language and literature entails the ability to analyze the composition of literary and non-literary texts, to identify and evaluate literary arguments and cultural ideologies, to situate literary texts within their literary, cultural, and intellectual histories, and to assess and weigh the merits of contending critical readings of primary texts as well as the underpinning methodologies of those critical readings (commonly referred to as "literary theory"), and to identify and articulate innovative and/or original directions in/for current scholarly discussions. It also entails the ability to conduct research in the field, identifying appropriate research resources and scholarship relevant to the project at hand.

(2) Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about language and literature, with an awareness of interdisciplinary connections (see Goal II).

(3) Demonstrate effective professional practices in research, analysis, and communication (See Goal III).

Because all three of these objectives are interdependent, all three are measured by the evaluation of research papers produced in graduate courses, and by graduate examinations.

The goals of the English MA program are aligned with the University’s mission of providing high quality education, scholarship, and service to qualified students for the benefit of regional, state, national, and international constituencies. Additionally, they are in exact alignment with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences mission to provide an understanding of "human beings in their diversity as expressed in their literatures, histories, ideas, values, oral and written expressions, and behavior. By promoting analytic, interpretive, interpersonal, and communication skills, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences facilitates personal growth, competent professionalism, and responsible citizenship."

Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Assessment Exam Books and Diversity

Learning Objective Description:

In order to facilitate student engagement with texts that represent experiences from a variety of different cultures, all students will encounter diverse texts on the yearly list of ten assessment books. The list of assessment texts changes every year.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstration of Critical Abilities: Graduate Examinations

Learning Objective Description:

English graduate students will demonstrate their abilities as independent critical thinkers, researchers, and writers capable of employing sophisticated skills in written analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and of using a professional idiom in making written arguments. The program's success in achieving this objective will be measured by student pass rate of graduate examinations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Graduate Examination Pass Rate as Indicator of Students’ Critical Abilities

Indicator Description:

A passing score on a Graduate Examination is a strong indicator that a student in English has acquired the critical skills appropriate to a graduate-level education in English, and is well-prepared for future professional endeavors. Working closely with faculty, students begin preparing for the Graduate Exams in their first semester, identifying areas of emphasis, which they will diversely explore during their course of study. They will be examined on these areas by three professors after completing 18 credit hours of study, and before the completion of 36 credit hours

Criterion Description:

At least 90% of examination essays will pass (with a grade of pass or high pass).

An examination grading rubric and sample pass, fail, and high pass essays are attached.

One makeup assessment exam was administered with a grade of pass.

Four students took the assessment exam in May 2022, three students passed the exam. The failing student is remediating her writing to see what she needs to work to ensure that she produces stronger graduate-level work.

Attached Files

 [MAAssessmentExamAssessmentRubric2020.docx](#)

 [Assessment paper pass example\].docx](#)

 [MA Exam fail example.docx](#)

Findings Description:

Five students to the MA assessment exam in May 2023. Four out of five students passed the exam with an "acceptable" essay. One student failed the exam with a "deficient" essay. This student will retake the exam in fall 2023, after working with the MA Director to improve her writing so that it meets the standards of graduate level writing. The pass rate is 80%.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Advising

Action Description:

The English MA Director has advised all MA and MFA/MA students for courses for summer and fall 2023.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Graduate Examination Pass Rate as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Action Description:

The assessment exam was administered in May 2023. Four out of five students passed the exam. The pass rate was 80%.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstration of Critical Abilities: Research Papers

Learning Objective Description:

English graduate students will demonstrate their abilities as independent critical thinkers, researchers, and writers capable of employing sophisticated skills in written analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and of using a professional idiom in making written arguments. The program's success in achieving this objective will be measured by a holistic assessment of research papers written to complete graduate courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Performance in Class Writing as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Indicator Description:

The ability of students to write according to accepted professional standards is a direct indicator of the MA in English program's success in producing graduates who have acquired appropriate critical thinking, researching, and writing skills and are prepared for future professional endeavors. To that end, a significant amount of student writing is required in English graduate coursework.

To assess the effectiveness of class writing assignments in developing students' ability to make sophisticated arguments about literature, language, and writing disciplines in a critical idiom appropriate to professional standards, the faculty undertake an annual holistic review of representative graduate student writing produced during the reporting period.

Professors in graduate classes submit a term paper from every third student on their class rosters; although the number of samples is smaller or larger according to the number of courses taught in a given semester, the sampling represents a broad cross-section of students because it is random. One of the problems with representation, however, is that different sorts of graduate courses require different kinds of assignments. To help with the assessment, then, professors are required to submit the assignments; writing is evaluated not only by the standards that govern the profession but also by its success in fulfilling specific assignments.

Criterion Description:

At least 92% of representative graduate essays evaluated during the holistic assessment will be scored as acceptable or excellent (a combined score of 5 or higher on the scale described below). A rubric for evaluating graduate student writing is attached. Assessment Process: 1. To assure that the assessment reviews a representative sampling of writing, graduate professors in both long terms are asked to submit term papers or other significant writing from every third student listed on their class rosters. 2. Two primary readers from among the graduate English faculty independently read and score each essay under review; in the case of an unreliable result, the essay is referred to a secondary reader, who reads the essay independently, without any knowledge of the previous results (see number 5, below) 3. Each primary reader scores each essay on a 4-point scale, with a score of 4 the highest possible. The two primary scores are added to yield a total, with the final scores ranging from 8 (highest possible) to 2 (lowest possible). A combined score of 5 or higher is passing. A score of 7 or 8 indicates an excellent essay; a score of 5 or 6 indicates an acceptable essay; a score of 4 or less indicates an unacceptable essay. 4. Reliability of the two scores is assumed when both scores from the primary readers are congruent, that is, when they are within 1 point of each other. For example, a score of 6 that would be seen as reliable would mean that both readers marked the essay as a 3. A reliable score of 5 would mean that one reader assessed the essay as a 3 while the other reader assessed it as a 2. 5. Should the primary scores for an essay not be reliable—for example, a 4 and a 1, a 3 and a 1, a 4 and a 2—the essay is referred to a secondary reader. If that reader agrees with the higher score, the essay is certified as acceptable or excellent; if the secondary reader agrees with the lower score, the essay is certified as unacceptable; if the secondary reader's score falls in the middle of two extremes, the average of the three scores determines the outcome.

Attached Files

 [Holistic Grading Rubric](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Performance in Class Writing as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Action Description:

Students are assessed for graduate-level writing

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase Diversity of Research

Learning Objective Description:

Demonstrate the critical thinking, research, and writing includes research by BIPOC scholars. Inclusion of methods for diverse research in the English MA Blackboard organization.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Creating a Diverse Student Population

Performance Objective Description:

Consistent with the institutional mission of diversity and inclusion, the English MA program will seek to create a population of diverse students from a variety of different cultural backgrounds.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase faculty diversity

Performance Objective Description:

The English MA program needs to diversify its faculty by hiring more faculty of color. This is in keeping with the diverse curricular changes of the newly revised MA program. Ideally, a new faculty hire would be in African American literature or African literature (or literature of the African Diaspora). It is also in keeping with the diversity and inclusion mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the university.

One new faculty member, Dr. La-Toya Scott, was hired and started in August 2023. She will teach U.S. Ethnic and African American Literature.

Goal II: Critical Research in Literary Studies

Goal Description:

The English MA program at Sam Houston State University has three defined goals, all of which share the common aim of preparing graduates as scholars, teachers, professional writers, and advocates for the Humanities. While the number of graduates who have entered PhD programs or taken teaching positions in area high schools or at two- and four-year colleges is an objective measure of our success in accomplishing this goal, not all of our students pursue further graduate degrees, or secondary/post-secondary teaching. That in mind, the MA faculty has determined three measurable learning objectives that apply uniformly to all MA students in English from Sam Houston State University:

(1) Demonstrate the ability to think theoretically and critically about language and literature, including the ability to apply research methods and critical theories reflective of the current state of scholarship (See Goal I).

(2) Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about language and literature, with an awareness of interdisciplinary connections.

To write cogently about language and literature entails the ability to think critically about texts (their composition, their historical context in which they were produced, and their legacies), to conduct focused research that investigates both primary and secondary sources pertinent and current to the project at hand, to organize, arrange, and weigh critical commentaries, to evaluate and select the most effective scholarly genre of expression for the project at hand (i.e. seminar or conference paper, critical essay, conference poster, book chapter), to present quotations and citations of both primary and secondary sources, including bibliographies, in a manner that is both scholarly and in accordance to professional publication formats, and to articulate and defend scholarly theses in a manner that defines (implicitly or explicitly) what characterizes 'literary studies' in relation to other disciplines.

(3) Demonstrate effective professional practices in research, analysis, and communication (See Goal III).

Because all three of these objectives are interdependent, all three are measured by the evaluation of research papers produced in graduate courses, and by graduate examinations.

The goals of the English MA program are aligned with the University’s mission of providing high quality education, scholarship, and service to qualified students for the benefit of regional, state, national, and international constituencies. Additionally, they are in exact alignment with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences mission to provide an understanding of "human beings in their diversity as expressed in their literatures, histories, ideas, values, oral and written expressions, and behavior. By promoting analytic, interpretive, interpersonal, and communication skills, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences facilitates personal growth, competent professionalism, and responsible citizenship" (SHSU CHSS "Mission and Vision Statement").

Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstration of Critical Abilities: Graduate Examinations

Learning Objective Description:

English graduate students will demonstrate their abilities as independent critical thinkers, researchers, and writers capable of employing sophisticated skills in written analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and of using a professional idiom in making written arguments. The program's success in achieving this objective will be measured by student pass rate of graduate examinations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Graduate Examination Pass Rate as Indicator of Students’ Critical Abilities

Indicator Description:

A passing score on a Graduate Examination is a strong indicator that a student in English has acquired the critical skills appropriate to a graduate-level education in English, and is well-prepared for future professional endeavors. Working closely with faculty, students begin preparing for the Graduate Exams in their first semester, identifying areas of emphasis, which they will diversely explore during their course of study. They will be examined on these areas by three professors after completing 18 credit hours of study, and before the completion of 36 credit hours

Criterion Description:




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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Advising

Action Description:

The English MA Director has advised all MA and MFA/MA students for courses for summer and fall 2023.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Graduate Examination Pass Rate as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Action Description:

The assessment exam was administered in May 2023. Four out of five students passed the exam. The pass rate was 80%.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstration of Critical Abilities: Research Papers

Learning Objective Description:

English graduate students will demonstrate their abilities as independent critical thinkers, researchers, and writers capable of employing sophisticated skills in written analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and of using a professional idiom in making written arguments. The program's success in achieving this objective will be measured by a holistic assessment of research papers written to complete graduate courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Performance in Class Writing as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Indicator Description:

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To assess the effectiveness of class writing assignments in developing students' ability to make sophisticated arguments about literature, language, and writing disciplines in a critical idiom appropriate to professional standards, the faculty undertake an annual holistic review of representative graduate student writing produced during the reporting period.

Professors in graduate classes submit a term paper from every third student on their class rosters; although the number of samples is smaller or larger according to the number of courses taught in a given semester, the sampling represents a broad cross-section of students because it is random. One of the problems with representation, however, is that different sorts of graduate courses require different kinds of assignments. To help with the assessment, then, professors are required to submit the assignments; writing is evaluated not only by the standards that govern the profession but also by its success in fulfilling specific assignments.

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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

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Action Description:

Students are assessed for graduate-level writing

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase Diversity of Research

Learning Objective Description:

Demonstrate the critical thinking, research, and writing includes research by BIPOC scholars. Inclusion of methods for diverse research in the English MA Blackboard organization.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Creating a Diverse Student Population

Performance Objective Description:

Consistent with the institutional mission of diversity and inclusion, the English MA program will seek to create a population of diverse students from a variety of different cultural backgrounds.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase faculty diversity

Performance Objective Description:

The English MA program needs to diversify its faculty by hiring more faculty of color. This is in keeping with the diverse curricular changes of the newly revised MA program. Ideally, a new faculty hire would be in African American literature or African literature (or literature of the African Diaspora). It is also in keeping with the diversity and inclusion mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the university.

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Goal III: Critical Writing in Literary Studies

Goal Description:

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- (2) Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about language and literature, with an awareness of interdisciplinary connections (See Goal II).

(3) Demonstrate effective professional practices in research, analysis, and communication.

The demonstration of effective professional practices in research, analysis, and communication entails the ability to define, explore, and conduct sustained research including database and archival investigations; an understanding of, and the ability to produce, conventional and formal writing styles (including informal professional communications such as emails and blog posts, and formal styles such as academic book reviews and journal articles); the ability to format documents in accordance with specified publication formats (MLA format, for example), and the ability to discuss the etiquette of academic/professional presentations that promotes scholarship and academic community, professionalism, and responsible citizenship.

Because All three of these objectives are interdependent, all three are measured by the evaluation of research papers produced in graduate courses, and by graduate examinations.

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Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

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Action Description:

Students are assessed for graduate-level writing

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase Diversity of Research

Learning Objective Description:

Demonstrate the critical thinking, research, and writing includes research by BIPOC scholars. Inclusion of methods for diverse research in the English MA Blackboard organization.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Creating a Diverse Student Population

Performance Objective Description:

Consistent with the institutional mission of diversity and inclusion, the English MA program will seek to create a population of diverse students from a variety of different cultural backgrounds.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase faculty diversity

Performance Objective Description:

The English MA program needs to diversify its faculty by hiring more faculty of color. This is in keeping with the diverse curricular changes of the newly revised MA program. Ideally, a new faculty hire would be in African American literature or African literature (or literature of the African Diaspora). It is also in keeping with the diversity and inclusion mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the university.

One new faculty member, Dr. La-Toya Scott, was hired and started in August 2023. She will teach U.S. Ethnic and African American Literature.

Increase Diversity and Inclusion

Goal Description:

The English MA program will engage in initiatives that increase the diversity of the students and faculty as well as content studied.

Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Assessment Exam Books and Diversity

Learning Objective Description:

In order to facilitate student engagement with texts that represent experiences from a variety of different cultures, all students will encounter diverse texts on the yearly list of ten assessment books. The list of assessment texts changes every year.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

DEI curricular items

Learning Objective Description:

Consider developing a second graduate methods course that is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics so that students develop skills in such things as writing diversity statements for PhD or other applications; learning about DEI issues as they are specifically related to the field of English (the research process that is specific to a DEI topic).

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

International Applicants and Diversity

Performance Objective Description:

As part of the efforts to diversify the student population, the English MA program will create a plan to address increased interest in the program from international applicants.

We have had two international students accepted into the program. The first international student is starting the program in fall '22. The other international student has deferred admission until spring '23.

Our first international student from Bangladesh completed her first year in the program, and passed the assessment exam in May 2023. Our other admitted international student from Nigeria had problems obtaining a student visa and did not enter the program.

New Goal Item

Goal Description:

There are periodic updates made to the MA handbook to reflect university academic policies.

Providing Department: English MA

Progress: Ongoing

New Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Closing Summary

Our focus has become the recruitment of new students as our enrollment has dropped.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

Our recruitment rate has increased. More classes are being offered online.

As of Fall 2023, 10 students (including spring 23) were admitted into the MA program and 9 enrolled in courses, and 1 admitted student chose not to enter the MA program at this time. The number of new students has increased significantly due to a variety of factors--we are offering more online classes, some MFA students became dual degree MFA/MA, and we have increased the recruitment of students from our undergraduate English program.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

The English MA program will continue to offer online courses to meet the needs of graduate certificate students who would like to go on to the English MA.