

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 fall 2023 , spring 2024, and summer 2024 semesters.

Target Description:

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

Results 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.

19 MA students have been advised for the spring 24 semester and .

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Advising

Action Description:

As students are admitted to the program, they are advised by the MA director. All students currently enrolled are advised by the director. The MA director plans to hold weekly on-campus office hours as well as being available via Zoom to advise MA students about classes, the exam, the research project, and thesis.

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:

For the 23-24 AY four students took the exam. One student failed the exam. A remediation plan has been developed and put in place with the student.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**Student Writing Remediation****Action Description:**

One student who took the MA assessment exam, which was scored by 3 faculty members, failed the exam. These scores were reported on August 25. A remediation plan for the student has been developed by the MA director and discussed with the student. Four students took the exam during the 23-24 AY, so we had a 75% pass rate.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1**Maintenance of English MA organization in Blackboard****Performance Objective Description:**

The English MA Director will maintain the Blackboard organization content to enhance communication with faculty and students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2**Maintenance of English MA organization in Blackboard****KPI Description:**

The MA Director created an organization in Blackboard that includes links to departmental (i.e., the MA handbook), college, SHSU Graduate School, and professional organization (i.e., the Modern Language Association) items. The MA Director will update the organization with announcements and information frequently. The MA Director also monitors, by adding or deleting, members of the organization.

Target Description:

The target for success of the English MA Blackboard organization is that it serves as a virtual resource where MA students and faculty can obtain information about the program. There are links to the SHSU Graduate School resources, English MA Advising, thesis, assessment exam, announcement of upcoming conferences and the like.

Results Description:

Updates that reflect current and future course offerings, announcements, and other revisions have been made to the English MA Blackboard organization for the fall 23 semester.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**Blackboard Organization****Action Description:**

The English MA Blackboard site will be updated for the fall 24 semester. The MA Director will better communicate with faculty and students about the materials available in the Blackboard organization, as well as collaborate with SHSU Online to track usage to determine the usefulness of the organization.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1**Social Media****Performance Objective Description:**

The English MA program will create a Facebook page to disseminate information about the program to prospective and current students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Facebook Page Creation

KPI Description:

In order to disseminate information about the MA program, the MA Director is creating and administering the program's Facebook page.

Target Description:

The creation of a Facebook page, and other social media initiatives are currently on hold until the necessary resources become available.

Results Description:

It has been decided after discussion with MA students that a Facebook page may not be the best way to communicate with students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Social Media

Action Description:

Plans are underway to create an Instagram account. The English MA program has been promised 5 hours of a graduate assistant's time per week for fall 2024. One of the duties assigned to this person will be creating and maintaining a social media presence for the MA.

Critical Thinking, Research, and Writing 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.

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.

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.

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 2

Diversity in MA Assessement Texts

Indicator Description:

The texts provided to students for the MA assessment will include works by BIPOC writers to ensure that students are required to read works by writers from outside the Anglo-American tradition and will study works in world Englishes.

Criterion Description:

At least 40% of the texts will be by BIPOC writers and at least 10% of the texts will represent a writer of world English.

Findings Description:

Of the ten texts for the 23-24 AY, seven are by BIPOC authors and two of the texts are by African authors, representing world Englishes.

Attached Files

 [2023-24 Assessment Texts.docx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

MA Assessment Exam

Action Description:

A committee has been appointed to discuss the entire MA assessment exam structure and whether a different measure needs to be developed to demonstrate student learning outcomes.

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.

Attached Files

 [MAAssessmentExamAssessmentRubric2024.docx](#)

 [Successful MA assessment exam 2024](#)

Findings Description:

Our current MA assessment exam is based on ten texts which are given to students the first semester they are an MA student. For the 2023-2024 AY the exam has two dates of administration, May and August. One student chose to take the May exam and successfully passed it. Three other students will be taking the exam the second weekend of August. One student did not pass the exam during the August

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Graduate Examination Pass Rate as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Action Description:

The MA committee during the 23-24 AY discussed the need to reexamine our assessment exam. This will be a major focus of the program during the 24-25 AY. Four students took the exam during the 23-24 AY and 3 successfully passed it.

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.

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](#)

Findings Description:

Due to the change in MA directors and the incoming director's lack of access to the assessment plan, no papers were collected for independent review. Students have been successfully making high grades in their English classes which can be seen as an indication of writing success.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Performance in Class Writing as Indicator of Students' Critical Abilities

Action Description:

The MA committee will discuss the best way to judge students' writing abilities during the 24-25 AY and create a plan for implementation.

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 2

Diversity in MA Assesement Texts

Indicator Description:

The texts provided to students for the MA assessment will include works by BIPOC writers to ensure that students are required to read works by writers from outside the Anglo-American tradition and will study works in world Englishes.

Criterion Description:

At least 40% of the texts will be by BIPOC writers and at least 10% of the texts will represent a writer of world English.

Findings Description:

Of the ten texts for the 23-24 AY, seven are by BIPOC authors and two of the texts are by African authors, representing world Englishes.

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 [2023-24 Assessment Texts.docx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

MA Assessment Exam

Action Description:

A committee has been appointed to discuss the entire MA assessment exam structure and whether a different measure needs to be developed to demonstrate student learning outcomes.

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: On Hold

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

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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

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.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Students will demonstrate familiarity with BIPOC authors and writers of world Englishes

Performance Objective Description:

Student will demonstrate familiarity with BIPOC authors and writers of world Englishes by discussing these writers on the MA assessment exam.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Diversity of texts for MA assessment

KPI Description:

When taking the MA assessment exam, the books the student writes about on the assessment exam will be recorded by the MA director before the exams are distributed for scoring.

Target Description:

Half of the books written about by the students on the MA assessment exam will be by BIPOC authors. At least one book will be by a writer of world Englishes.

Results Description:

Four students took the assessment exam in 23-24 AY. For three students 100% of the books they wrote about were by BIPOC writers. For one student, 80% of the books written about were by BIPOC writers. All of the students wrote about one writer of world English and two wrote about two writers of world English

Attached Files

 [Assessment exam 2023-2024.docx](#)

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

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

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.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

The English MA program in 23-24 offered the required courses of 5301 and 5302 as synchronous online courses with successful enrollment and completion rates. Five online courses applicable to the English MA were offered in fall 2023, seven online courses were offered in spring 2024, and four online course were offered in summer 24. One course in the summer had so many students enrolled that it had to be broken into two separate sections.

Online course offerings will be a vital part of the MA program moving forward.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

The MA program is under new leadership. Plans have been made to appoint a committee to look at our MA assessment exam and make recommendations about ways to improve it. The MA committee will also examine the writing component of the assessment plan and evaluate ways to effectively implement it.

The MA director has met with the new CHSS Marketing and Communication Director to discuss ways to publicize the program, and a graduate assistant has been assigned to work with the MA director for 5 hours per week in the fall.