

Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2013-14

Department: English

Program(s): English major, all options (Literature, Writing, English Education)

1. What Was Done

For FY 2013-14 we evaluated Learning Outcome 3 from our Assessment Plan for all three of our major options. The outcome is as follows:

“Students will be proficient in producing writing that is focused, well-elaborated and supported, and well-edited.”

2. What Data Were Collected

A random sample was selected of three final papers from each of the option-specific capstone courses: LIT 494RH for Literature, WRIT 494RH for Writing, and ENGL 461RH for English Education. Five faculty members were assigned to perform the evaluations, with variability in the number of papers evaluated and assignments strategically made so that evaluators would generally be reading outside their area of specialization.

3. What Was Learned

Strengths:

Evaluators uniformly (with one exception) found specific strengths in the capstone papers: clarity, sound organization, consistent focus, substantive support and elaboration, and careful editing. Special note was made in two cases of excellent citation skills. Evaluators generally gave high marks for all of the elements of proficiency referred to in the learning outcome.

Areas needing attention:

There was no apparent pattern, across the samples, of a lack of writing proficiency generally or specifically. However, in two cases, apparently idiosyncratic weaknesses were identified by the evaluators. In one case, a lack of effective paragraph transitions was noted (“a small quibble”), and in another, vagueness, lack of clarity in progression, and incomplete citation were identified. Further comments from the evaluator suggest that the difficulties in the latter paper were related to a larger problem of understanding and managing the ideational and theoretical content of the piece.

It was determined that the capstone courses give evidence of creating a learning environment in which students are provided the opportunity to produce proficient writing.

4. How We Responded

This assessment round revealed no patterns of writing proficiency problems. The single case in which difficulties were found is assumed to be anomalous.