

Assessment of Majors/General Education Competency Template for 2005

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Key Learning Outcomes: What should students be able to do AFTER completing this program? State learning outcomes simply and in measurable terms. Please limit the number of outcomes to five or fewer. If your department reports on General Education competency areas (writing, foreign language, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning), please use this form to report on those areas in a separately generated document.

1. Students should use problem-solving and analytical skills to construct a sustained argument on a chosen subject.
2. Students should be able to write in clear, concise and fluent prose.
3. Students should develop effective oral communication skills; in particular, they should be able to express an idea with clarity and confidence before a group of faculty and peers.
4. Students should be able to use available research tools, including informational technology, in constructing a research project.
5. Students should understand and be able to apply major critical methodologies to the analysis of literature.

Please link learning outcomes to the College's Desired Accomplishments/Goals.

1.1 (skills necessary to educate themselves)	Outcomes 1, 2, 4
1.2 (prepared to assume responsibility of citizenship)	Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4
1.3 (appreciate and respect diverse cultures)	Outcomes 4, 5
1.5 (understand the value of an education)	Outcomes 1, 4
1.6 (international perspective)	Outcomes 4, 5
1.7 (honor and integrity)	Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4
1.8 (leadership skills)	Outcomes 1, 2, 3

Through what courses/assignments will you ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn this? List key courses, capstones, internships, experiences, etc.

CO MM 100	Public Speaking
COMM 200	Oral Interpretation
ENGL 101	Composition
ENGL 102	Composition
ENGL 103H	Honors Composition

ENGL 301	Appalachian Prose and Poetry
ENGL 303	African-American Poetry and Prose
ENGL 308	Southern Literature
ENGL 309	Asian-American Literature
ENGL 325	Selected Readings in English Literature I
ENGL 326	Selected Readings in English Literature II
ENGL 341	An Introduction to the Study of the English Language
ENGL 342	History of the English Language
ENGL 381	Survey of American Poetry and Prose I
ENGL 382	Survey of American Poetry and Prose II
ENGL 395	Literary Criticism
ENGL 400	Chaucer
ENGL 401	Studies in Medieval Literature
ENGL 405	Shakespeare: The Early Plays
ENGL 406	Shakespeare: The Late Plays
ENGL 370	17 th Century British Literature
ENGL 371	18 th Century British Literature
ENGL 372	19 th Century British Literature
ENGL 373	The Early British Novel
ENGL 403	Modern and Contemporary Poetry
ENGL 404	Modern British and American Prose
ENGL 491	Senior Seminar 1
ENGL 492	Senior Seminar 2
LIBR 202	Literature of the Humanities

Please list all tools used for assessing student achievement (CRTs, MFTs, capstones, exit interviews, external reviews, etc.). Choose a minimum of three tools

Original research paper, formal presentation of original research, portfolio of writing samples, and exit interviews

How will you assess how well your students are learning? List standards/performance indicators, etc., taking care to provide quantifiable means (for example, all students should earn a minimum 50% on exit exam; 65 % should earn a minimum 70%; with a rubric, indicate the scale used, the levels of competence, what is identified as “competent,” and what constitutes competence for each outcome measure, what percentage of students you would expect to see at each level, etc.). Be sure to spell out criteria.

Senior Seminar project – This final paper will be used to assess research (Outcome 4), writing (Outcome 2), and analysis (Outcome 1) skills. Each essay will be evaluated by at least two people. The rubric explores a student’s ability to A) construct a thesis; B) organize an essay; C) create effective and supportive paragraphs; D) write grammatically and effectively; and E) integrate sources effectively and ethically in their work. Research skills will be evaluated by using Question E. Writing skills will be evaluated by using Questions A, B, C, and D. Analysis skills will be evaluated by using Questions A and B. All students must receive a score of 70% or 3.5; 60% will achieve a 4.0; and 30% will achieve a 5.0.

Senior Seminar Public Presentation – To assess oral communication skills (Outcome 3), student must receive an average score of 70 % or 3.5 from faculty evaluators on the Oral Competency Rubric to be competent. Typically, five-six faculty members evaluate each student presenter. At least 60% will receive an average of 4.0; 30% will get an average of 5.0.

Writing portfolio – To further assess analytical (Outcome 1), research (Outcome 4) and writing skills (Outcome 2), student must show improvement in ability to construct and support an argument and to write effectively. Included in the portfolio is the students’ Senior Seminar projects, which will have been evaluated using the Writing Competency Rubric. The portfolios will also allow us to see whether students are able to apply major critical methodologies to the analysis of literature. Improvement is assessed by determining if the student improved on early errors that were noted by instructors on writing samples. The person who evaluates the portfolios (the Department Chair or English Literature Coordinator) will use the Writing Competency Rubric to summarize the work in the students’ portfolios.

Exit interviews – Students are asked to respond in writing and orally to questions about the program. See attached questionnaire for exit interview. Interviews allow students to identify problem areas in the program, without fear of consequences. (Interviews are conducted at the end of the semester by a faculty member who does not teach English courses.) Students are specifically asked whether they had sufficient opportunities to develop reading, writing, research and critical thinking skills. They are also asked to indicate which courses they found most and least useful. After the interviews are conducted, the interviewer writes a report that is included in the department’s yearly assessment report, created by the Department Chair. Problems we identify during these interviews are then transformed into recommendations for changes in policies or staffing.

How often, when, and under what circumstances will you gather the relevant data?

Data will be gathered once a year, at the end of spring semester of the students' senior year. All students in the major will deliver the presentation, submit a research paper, a portfolio, and participate in an exit interview.

Summarize what has been learned about how well students are achieving desired outcomes.

Senior Seminar Project

To evaluate our students' research skills, analytical skills and writing skills, we scored each student by using the Writing Competency Rubric. While we plan to have multiple readers starting with our 2006 graduates, in 2005 only one faculty member completed a rubric for each student. The following chart shows the results of the evaluation:

	Thesis	Organization	Paragraphing	Language	Sources	Overall
Holly	5	5	5	4	4	4.6
Brittany	5	5	5	5	4	4.8
Susan	4	3	3	4	4	3.6
Erin	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
Leah*	3	2	2	4	4	3.0
Sarah	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
Michael	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
Josh	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
Bonnie	5	5	5	5	4	4.8
Lucas	5	4	4	4	5	4.4
Overall	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.52

*Note: this student did not complete the course successfully.

In setting our goals, we had indicated that 100% of students would score a 3.5 or better. While one student did not achieve this score, she did not pass the class and had to repeat the course the following year. (She performed with distinction the next year.) We had said that 60% would achieve a 4.0, but 80% of our students performed at this level. We indicated that 30% of our students would achieve a 5.0, but 40% actually achieved at this level.

An average was also calculated of the students' performance in each category. Organization and paragraphing are the lowest averages (see final row in chart, above), but one should note that the one student who didn't pass the course brought those averages down dramatically by scoring a 2.0 in each. Overall, our students performed at a very high standard. Even including our one student who didn't pass, the aggregate score for our students' capstone papers was a 4.52.

Senior Seminar Public Presentation:

To evaluate our students' oral competency, the department uses the Oral Competency Rubric. Four to six people evaluate each students' performance. There were ten students who gave Seminar presentations, although one student had to repeat the course, and, hence, did not graduate. The following chart provides a summary of our students' work:

	Thesis	Organ.	Research	Language	Questions	Delivery	Overall
Holly	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.77
Brittany	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.6	5.0	4.8
Susan	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.0	3.7	4.0
Erin	5.0	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.8	5.0	4.9
Leah*	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.22
Sarah	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Michael	4.4	4.4	4.6	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.58
Josh	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.96
Bonnie	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.86
Lucas	5.0	4.6	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.84
Overall	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.7

*Note: this student did not complete the course successfully.

Our expectations were that all students would achieve a 3.5 (which we define as competent). All students met this goal. We had indicated that at least 60% of our students would achieve a score of a 4.0. Students' overall scores (right hand column) indicate that 100% of students met this goal. We had also indicated that 30% would receive an average of a 5.0. We missed that goal by a small margin. We had one student receive a perfect score of 5.0. That means that in six different categories, she was given a perfect 5 by five different professors. Two other students came close to this goal. One student scored a 4.96, and another a 4.9.

A calculation was also performed to look at whether our students have any weaknesses in the areas we are observing. The bottom row provides an analysis of our students' overall performance in each category. Since students' averages in each category were a 4.6 and above, we detect no major deficiencies. Overall, our students scored a 4.7 in the area of oral communication skills, which is very high indeed.

When we began collecting data on our Senior Seminar students' performances, we were using a different instrument, which we have continued to use. The following is a summary of results gleaned by using this instrument:

	ENGL 491	ENGL 492
Strength of Argument	4.44	4.73
Command of the Material	4.5	4.81

Delivery

4.57

4.77

While students are evaluated in six different categories, we have determined that the above three were the most important. As such, we have been reporting on this data for several years. As is typical of our students, these results are excellent. Not only did students perform very well in each of these important categories (with scores above 4.5), but they also improved in each and every category over the course of the year. These results suggest that our students are performing at a very high level.

Summary of English Students' Portfolio Assessment

There were nine students who graduated in 2005. (The one student, included in the measures above, who did not pass ENGL 492, the second semester of the capstone course, was not included in this evaluation, since she wasn't graduating.) Their portfolios were reviewed by evaluating the extent to which they reflected the key learning outcomes described in the Competency Template. Goal number three (which speaks to students' oral communication competency) was not used here, since it is not measurable using the portfolio and since it is evaluated elsewhere.

Key Learning Outcome Number One, which specifies that students need to be able to construct and to sustain an argument, was met quite well by our students. Eight of the nine students demonstrated the ability to create and to support an argument—particularly in their capstone projects. There was one student, who was somewhat weaker, but who still met this requirement to a certain degree.

Key Learning Outcome Number Two, which specifies that students write in a clear and effective manner, was also met very well by these students. Again, eight of the nine students met this requirement easily. One student (a different one from the one who met Key Learning Outcome One marginally) met this standard, but not as well as the other eight students.

Our students universally met Key Learning Outcome Number Four, which specifies that students be able to conduct research effectively. Some students had included other research papers in their portfolios besides their Senior Seminar projects. But all of our students did effective research during their capstone course.

Key Learning Outcome Number Five specifies that students should understand and be able to apply the major critical methodologies when doing literary analysis. Students used the following methodologies in their work: new criticism, feminist criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, Marxist criticism, cultural criticism, and linguistic criticism. The first two were the most frequently used. Each student had included essays that revealed that they had mastered at least two different major methodologies. Perhaps we should consider emphasizing some of the ones besides feminist and new critical methodologies in our courses, so that students are able to practice (and, perhaps, to master) even more of these techniques.

An analysis of the students' portfolios is summarized (below) by using the Writing Competency Rubric:

	Thesis	Organ.	Paragraphing	Language	Sources	Overall
Holly	5	5	5	4	5	5
Brittany	5	5	5	5	5	5
Susan	5	5	5	5	5	5
Erin	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sarah	5	5	5	5	5	5
Michael	4	5	5	5	5	4.8
Josh	5	5	5	5	5	5
Bonnie	5	5	5	5	5	5
Lucas	5	5	5	4	5	4.8
Overall	4.89	5	5	4.89	5	4.95

This chart reflects the success our students achieve in each of the areas of competency. While many students would only put in their portfolio very good essays, despite their instructions to the contrary, these portfolios do reflect nicely on the work they are able to do. All but one student had included his or her seminar paper in the portfolio, which is often the students' best work. These essays (evaluated in another section) obviously reflect our students' level of achievement.

Exit Interviews:

On May 16, Rachel Tighe conducted exit interviews with the ten English Literature students graduating in spring or summer 2005. Students responded to a number of questions in written form prior to the interview and were asked to discuss their answers verbally at the interview.

As to the first questions, dealing with opportunities to develop basic critical reading, writing, speaking and discussion skills, the students all felt they had been given more than enough opportunities for reading, writing, and speaking in their Literature courses. Students were very positive about being given ample opportunities to develop basic skills.

As far as advanced research skills, all stated that they had been given numerous opportunities to develop advanced skills. The students noted that the library course had been very helpful in supplementing the research skills being taught in the major. Students once again noted that Senior Seminar was very useful in helping with all of the advanced skills.

As far as future plans, several students plan to go on into teaching or graduate study.

Finally, when asked specifically about coursework, students discussed courses they found beneficial and made suggestions for making improvements. The courses most frequently cited as beneficial were literary criticism, Chaucer, African-American literature, Shakespeare, and seminar.

While students had varying opinions about literature course that could be improved, the students unanimously disliked COMM 200 (Oral interpretation). Most said that they found the instructor patronizing. In addition, they felt there was not much difference between acting and oral interpretation and that the instructor's grading standards were unclear.

Finally, Rachel continued the practice of asking the students if they could design a dream course what would it be. This year the students consistently stated that they would like to add a grammar course. (We did offer this course as a special topics course in the Spring of 2006. Enrollment was small—seven students—but we will likely try to offer this course again in the future.)

Action Plan: What plans have you for the future based on the data gathered that will aim to improve student learning/achievement? Should students perform at less than the standard expected, what steps will the department take to improve their learning/performance? What steps does the department anticipate to improve the program otherwise?

If students do not achieve the standard set (a score of 3.5 on the Oral Communication and Writing Rubrics), the following steps will be taken:

- Gather and analyze evidence about which areas are problematic.
- Advise faculty as to which areas require additional attention.
- Develop specific assignments and/or policies (with input from all of the English faculty) to address the problem areas.

Comments

The only benchmark we did not achieve was the goal that 30% of students would receive a 5.0 when their seminar presentations are evaluated using the Oral Competency Rubric. As noted above, one student achieved a 5.0, one received a 4.96 and another received a 4.9. It might be more reasonable that, in the future, we adjust the benchmark slightly—with the expectation that 30% achieve a score of 4.90. This benchmark would still set a very high standard, but would be more reasonable.