

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2016-2017

English Graduate

M.A.

Program Mission:

The mission of the Department of English and Philosophy is to provide quality education leading to intellectual growth and professional success. In regards to “intellectual growth,” the program is committed to preserving, interpreting, and promoting the unique multicultural heritage of the region, and achieves this both the range of classes offered and the kind of unique theses our students complete, many of which are focused on the literary, creative, and composition aspects of the Southwest. In regards to “professional success,” the graduate program serves regional secondary school teachers, prospective community college teachers, students who plan to enter PhD programs, and students who seek stronger credentials in English for careers in journalism, publication, and professional writing. Each year, graduate assistantships are awarded competitively to full-time students. Along with tutoring in the Writing Center, graduate assistants undertake extensive teacher training in composition and gain considerable experience as composition instructors.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will produce high-quality written work demonstrating their interpretative and analytical skills through mastery of relevant and current theoretical concepts.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1

- Effective Communication Skills
- Effective Use of Technology
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Learning Outcome #1 is assessed by evaluation of a student’s written work at three key points in their academic career: their qualifying exam, their thesis proposal, and their thesis. The two English faculty department members, utilizing a form, score these written works on a scale of 1-5 based on Quality of Written Work. These three scores are averaged, and a score of 3.5 or higher is considered success. Specifically, 100% of English MA graduates will average a 3.5 or higher for “Quality of Written Work.”

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Second Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Learning Outcome #1 is further assessed by evaluation of a student's written work at three key points in their academic career: their qualifying exam, their thesis proposal, and their thesis. The two English faculty department members on the student's committee will, utilizing a form, score these written works on a scale of 1-5 based on Mastery of Relevant and Current Theoretical Concepts. These three scores are averaged, and a score of 3.5 or higher is considered success. Specifically, 100% of English MA graduates will average a 3.5 or higher for "Mastery Relevant and Current Theoretical Concepts."

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

In past years, some students did not meet the criteria, so we changed the procedure to ensure that students' Exit Documents were at the level of proficiency required for an MA Degree in English before we conducted Outcomes Assessment evaluations of them. This means that the Department of English MA Program has postponed some oral defenses and delayed signing off on theses until they were of suitable quality. Moreover, throughout the writing process, thesis chairs and committee members are working more closely with students to ensure that their writing skills demonstrate the desired level of proficiency for an MA in English. The Director of Composition has also instituted a Teaching Circle for instructors of composition including graduate students, which sometimes includes the workshopping of graduate student writing and this also helps students to improve their theses and meet the outcomes assessment criteria.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will display mastery of the subject and form of their chosen concentration area (Literature, Creative Writing, or Linguistics and Composition).

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2

- Effective Communication Skills
- Effective Use of Technology
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

Learning Outcome #2 is assessed by evaluation of a student's work at four key points in

their academic career: their qualifying exam, their thesis proposal, their thesis defense, and their thesis. The two English faculty department members on the student's committee will, utilizing a form, score these works on a scale of 1-5 based on Mastery of the Subject and Form. These four scores are averaged, and a score of 3.5 or higher is considered success. Specifically, 100% of English MA graduates will average a 3.5 or higher for "Mastery of the Subject and Form."

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

In the past two years and for the first time in over a decade, the Department of English has had a full load of tenure-track and tenured faculty with excellent credentials specializing in Creative Writing and Composition. Prior to that, since 2011 creative-writing students had different professors every year and sometimes creative writing classes were not offered in every area of the concentration. Moreover, in the concentration of composition, until two years ago, only one faculty member in the Department of English specialized in this concentration; and as the Director of Composition with multiple duties, he was not in a position to teach many composition courses for graduate students. With the addition of a new faculty member specializing in composition, and with tenure-track creative-writing faculty committed to maintaining and expanding their concentration, graduate students have been able to take more classes in their concentration and so have had more opportunities to master the form of their chosen area.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Students will be able to conduct, synthesize, interpret, document, and present original academic research.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3

- Effective Communication Skills
- Effective Use of Technology
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Learning Outcome #3 is assessed by evaluation of a student's written work at three key points in their academic career: their qualifying exam, their thesis proposal, and their

thesis. The two English faculty department members on the student's committee will, utilizing a form, score these written works on a scale of 1-5 based on "Ability to Conduct, Synthesize, Interpret, and Document Research." These three scores are averaged, and a score of 3.5 or higher is considered success. Specifically, 100% of English MA graduates will average a 3.5 or higher for "Ability to Conduct, Synthesize, Interpret, and Document Research."

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Second Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Learning Outcome #3 is further assessed by evaluation of a student's written work at three key points in their academic career: their qualifying exam, their thesis proposal, and their thesis. The two English faculty department members, utilizing a form, score these written works on a scale of 1-5 based on "Originality of Research or Creative Project." These three scores are averaged, and a score of 3.5 or higher is considered success. Specifically, 100% of English MA graduates will average a 3.5 or higher for "Originality of Research or Creative Project."

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

Engl. 601 Research Methods has been modified over the last couple of years to ensure that graduate students have direct experience of graduate level research in advance of beginning their thesis projects and so have learned more about the nature of original work. Moreover, the appointment of tenure-track faculty at the cutting edge of their fields has led to a sharp increase in graduate student participation in research activities. Graduate students were presenters in eleven conference sessions this past year, and three students published some of their work. These activities have greatly assisted students in understanding and producing original research and meeting the desired outcomes

Utilization of Results:

Faculty will continue to work on getting the students through to degree completion who were not permitted to finish in May 2017 because at that time their theses did not meet our desired outcomes.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

Graduate faculty in the Department of English discussed the possibility of offering a section of Engl. 535 ST Graduate Writing Workshop in the summer—in June—to help students complete their theses if their work had not reached the desired level of proficiency by the end of the spring semester. If Graduate Assistantships continue to be available in the summer, a number of faculty have expressed willingness to teach the course to help the students graduate. The director of graduate studies in English is also going to review the Outcomes Assessment reports of other graduate programs to see if an outcome can be added that enables the MA English Program to evaluate students across their degree from their first to last semester.

Retention Strategies:

See above. Also, the department discussed the possibility of offering a second graduate class in the summer so that graduate students could complete their degree within the desired two years and not consider dropping out at the end of the academic year. Often students disappear over the summer. If they were in classes, they would be more likely to resurface the following fall. And some students never graduate despite having completed all the degree requirements with the exception of their Exit Document. Engl. 535: The Graduate Writing Workshop could potentially solve this problem. The class could be opened up to other graduate students in the Humanities and Media Arts.