

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2018-2019

English Graduate

M.A.

Program Mission:

The mission of the Department of English and Philosophy is to provide a 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 through 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:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	6
Total Number of Students	6	Percent of Students Meeting	100 %

Assessed:		Criterion:	
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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:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	6
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

On average, the six graduating students surpassed our goal of scoring 3.5 and above; but at times throughout their studies, a few of them scored lower, indicating that faculty should continue to make this SLO a focus of attention. Nonetheless, apart from one student, who scored a 3 for the analytical and interpretative skills demonstrated in her thesis, all students averaged a 4 or higher, indicating that the graduate program is achieving its goal of producing superior writers, critical and analytical thinkers, and researchers. Moreover, while the graduate program has a goal of students meeting or exceeding 3.5, the score of 3 is considered average and proof of the student’s adequate proficiency in this SLO.

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:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	6
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Students perform very well in this area because students have the benefit of consistently learning from a variety of faculty members all teaching in their specific area of expertise. Graduate students continue to take more classes in their concentration than in the past, and they have enjoyed more faculty mentoring in their chosen area. Two students scored lower than 3.5 for early work in the program (qualifying exam, and thesis proposal); but the scores for their completed theses were 4-5, indicating a substantial improvement over the course of their studies. One student scored a 3 for the thesis, but as stated above, a score of 3 means “average,” which is an adequate level of performance.

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:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	6
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	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:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	6
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

Students continue to score well in this outcome due to the increased and consistent focus on research in classes and through faculty mentoring. Graduate students are also encouraged to present at conferences, although only one student out of this group did so. On the plus side, four out of six students completed their degree in two years.

Utilization of Results:

In reviewing the results, the English program realized that scoring 100% across all metrics isn't very useful if it means that we don't have good information about what areas might need the most improvement. There has been a tendency to evaluate outcomes with too much awareness of the desired outcome, leading to a tight clustering of scores that can be difficult to interpret.

The number of graduating students for the year was strong, indicating success in recent retention efforts. However, in an exit survey of graduating students, there was one significant area where the program earned lower marks than in other areas. This was "Preparation for and assistance with teaching" (3.80 out of 5). While still an overall good mark, it is lower than others, and we believe reflects the fact that our students have been working in the Writing Center more and teaching first year writing less. This is the result of two changes in recent years. First, the numbers of first time freshmen entering Highlands has dropped significantly in the past five years, which means there are fewer first year writing courses available. Second, the English department implemented a co-requisite model in which, ideally, one instructor teaches both the developmental writing course (ENGL 1060) and Composition I (ENGL 1110) in the same semester with the same group of students. This has led to improvement in composition outcomes, but at

the same time it reduces the number of single courses that could be taught by a graduate assistant.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

1. Perform OA evaluations with an eye to highlighting areas for improvement rather than achieving high OA results. Remind English faculty of the importance of accurate evaluation scores whenever they perform OA duties. In one year, if we are still achieving 100% success across all metrics, we will return to this and adjust the way that outcomes are evaluated or raise outcomes standards in order to collect better data.
2. Give students on Writing Center contracts duties that will provide them opportunities to develop pedagogy. This could include creating lessons and writing activities around issues such as citation practices, brainstorming, place-based writing, and other areas, that they could gain experience with as guest lecturers in composition classrooms. This will allow students to get more experience with instruction even before they have the ability to teach their own full class and will make them more confident and better teachers when they do.
3. Offer workshops to graduate students (and advanced undergraduate students) in English in order to help them prepare applications for advanced graduate work in PhD and MFA programs in the fall semester and job application materials in the spring semester.
4. Provide more support and advice for students who may need to take extra time beyond the two years in which students have been expected to finish the program.

Retention Strategies:

Retention in the English program has been strong in recent years. Six students graduated last year, and we have been successful in retaining all of our students from last year. One of the most important elements of retention for us is recognizing how busy our students' lives are and providing them appropriate support as they work towards completing their degrees. One area for improvement is in intervening earlier with students who aren't on track to finish their exit documents in time in order to give them support as they finish or to help them plan more proactively for finishing over the summer or the subsequent fall. One of the things we pride ourselves on is the ability of faculty to work individually with students that is responsible for our strong retention record.

MA English Program Improvement Plan (2018-2019)

SUMMARY	STEP/ACTION	SMART GOALS
1. Provide better data in the outcomes collection process that will help us	1. Graduate director will remind faculty of the importance of accurate evaluations each	1. Create an outcomes assessment process that does not lead to

<p>identify program weaknesses.</p>	<p>time they are engaged in collecting OA data. In fall 2020, we will look at revising the OA process if it seems necessary.</p>	<p>100% fulfillment of all outcomes.</p>
<p>2. Give students on Writing Center contracts duties that will provide them opportunities to develop pedagogy.</p>	<p>2. Writing Center director will give graduate students on GA contracts duties that include preparing lessons and other things that develop their pedagogical skills.</p>	<p>2. Each graduate student working in the writing center will create a lesson and teach it as a guest lecturer in a first year writing course.</p>
<p>3. Offer fall workshop on applying to PhD and MFA programs.</p>	<p>3. The graduate director in conjunction with other faculty will conduct a workshop for current graduate students and advanced undergraduates on how to prepare their application materials for continuing study in English.</p>	<p>3. One workshop held in October.</p>
<p>4. Offer spring workshop on preparing job application materials.</p>	<p>4. The graduate director in conjunction with other faculty will conduct a workshop for current graduate students on how to prepare documents for job applications. This will include instructions on preparing academic CVs and cover letters that provide useful information for employment in both the educational and professional fields.</p>	<p>4. One workshop held in the spring (March or April).</p>