

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2019-2021

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:	0
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:	0
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. There was one instance of a student scoring below the 3.5 average in individual areas, but they received a score of 4 or above for all other questions, suggesting that this student improved. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is only partial data available for one student, but their scores exceeded a 3.5 in data available. Only partial data is available for 1 student due to COVID pandemic, but scores exceeded 3.5 on data available. This data reinforces the idea that faculty mentoring students ensure success in these three writing tasks by not permitting students to complete their written exams, thesis proposal, or thesis until they are prepared.

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:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Students performed well due to continuous mentorship from faculty and from opportunities to take coursework with a variety of areas. As with the previous question, all graduate students achieved an average of over 3.5. Although partial data was only available for one student due to the COVID pandemic, their scores exceeded 3.5 on available data. Additionally, one student scored below a 3.5 for their qualifying exam scores rankings, but their average ranking still remained above a 3.5, indicating improvement.

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:	0
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Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%
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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 excelled in this outcome due to continued support from faculty, both as mentors during the thesis process and in coursework. Historically, our graduate students have been encouraged to present at conferences, but the pandemic hindered such efforts in 2020. Despite these challenges, students still excelled at this criterion, with average scores ranging from 3.8 to 5 across both means of assessment.

Utilization of Results:

These results revealed that, while the English graduate program continues to excel in meeting all three of its SLOs, the department realized in reviewing the data that our data might not reveal areas where we can continue to improve. Faculty evaluating students are aware of the desired outcome, which may affect their scoring, so added reminders of evaluation practices will also be useful.

In combination with the presence of one outlier for one student in the qualifying exam area, this suggests a need for the English program to discuss the options of evaluating graduate students based on their separate tracks. In reviewing our rubrics, we realized that using identical criteria for all three tracks may not be the most accurate gauge of success, as content area and citation practices vary depending on the nature of the thesis. The program will thus discuss the possibility of modifying our current documents to provide a more nuanced representation of our program’s strengths and areas for improvement.

Further, while the COVID pandemic has inhibited students’ ability to attend conference, the graduate program has continued to offer opportunities to present on-campus

through presentations in research methods courses and events like Geek Week. The English department can discuss additional options for presentations.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

1. Discuss options for revising our current assessment documents to be more track-specific. To ensure continued excellence, and in line with our unit’s strategic plan—specifically efforts to increase documentation efficiency and enrollment, we will explore the option of creating more specific criteria of evolution for each track. In line with the strategic plan, this could help increase the quality of our data, which could in turn help the program grow and expand.
2. Discuss developing more specific criteria for OA evaluation. As with item 1, this proposed discussion supports efforts to increase documentation efficiency and enrollment from our unit’s strategic plan. Strengthening the quality of our data can provide clearer indications of where the English department can improve, and thus strengthen both the department as well as its retention.
3. Discuss additional opportunities for on-campus presentations. In accordance with departmental efforts to increase student engagement through community-based research, writing, and publishing activities and serve the campus and local communities through high-visibility activities like Geek Week, the department will discuss potential expansions of on-campus presentations. Potential talking points include poetry nights involving creative writers and the *New Mexico Review* and writing center events, which would also serve our department’s objective of expanding writing center services. In addition, this would give graduate students as well as faculty potential opportunities to present their work.
4. Set clearer expectations for exit documents. With the development of Graduate Bridges for Success, a Brightspace Module for graduate students, the process of exit documents should be simplified. Both students and faculty can be made more aware of the process, leading to better recordkeeping and improved communication, both of which are mentioned in our departmental strategic plan.

Retention Strategies:

The COVID pandemic has severely impacted the retention of the English program. While our graduation rate continues to be strong, several students have left the program due to personal issues, and multiple students have taken longer than two years to complete the program. This underscores two considerations. First, the on-site nature of our program remains one of its strengths. While the graduate program currently offers some courses online or in hybrid format, operating on-site permits for more informal interaction between graduate students and faculty, which could create a better sense of community. As well, the writing center and *New Mexico Review* provide opportunities to a Second, students who have not completed the program within two years often face additional challenges. We continue to provide strong mentorship to these students while they work towards completion and to all students in the program.

MA English Program Improvement Plan (2021-2023)

SUMMARY	STEP/ACTION	SMART GOALS
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<p>1. Examine and discuss revising our assessment documents.</p>	<p>1. Review current tracks alongside documents to see if our assessment rubrics should be more track-specific.</p>	<p>1. Add to agenda for upcoming department meeting or graduate committee meeting.</p>
<p>2. Assess current criteria on assessment documents to improve data.</p>	<p>2. Review current rubrics for specificity of criteria to more closely align them with departmental needs.</p>	<p>2. Discuss reviewing current documents for verbiage and scoring in a department or graduate committee meeting.</p>
<p>3. Discuss the possibility of expanding on-campus events hosted by English.</p>	<p>3. Identify and create more opportunities for students to present their work—academic and creative—on campus.</p>	<p>3. Contact writing center director and <i>New Mexico Review</i> chair to discuss possibilities of expanding offerings and collaborating; add to agenda for future department or graduate committee meeting.</p>
<p>4. Improve communication about exit documents for faculty and students.</p>	<p>4. Add more detailed exit procedures to the departmental handbook, including direct mention of graduate bridges to success.</p>	<p>4. Collect information from Brightspace modules and consider developing quick sheets for exit documents.</p>