

## ASSESSMENT REPORT 2019-21

### English Undergraduate

### B.A.

#### **Program Mission:**

The NMHU English program “endeavors to develop in students a fluency in the use of English through critical, creative, and technical writing” and “provides foundational knowledge of literary periods, genres, theory, and language.” The University mission, the College of Arts and Sciences mission, and the English outcomes assessment instrument are strongly linked in the following ways: 1) The mission to provide undergraduate education; 2) the mission to provide for forms of cultural literacy; and 3) the need to promote verbal and analytical skills.

Based on our discussion about past OA reports, and in an effort to evaluate student learning outcomes in different areas of our major, the faculty members of the English department have decided to revise our undergraduate outcomes assessment plan. In the 2019-2020 academic year, we met to decide how to collect and assess data for the creative writing, composition, literacy, and linguistics courses. The revised plan that follows divides assessment into three categories:

**1) literature;**

**2) creative writing;** and

**3) literacy, linguistics, and composition.**

This change represents a significant addition to the number of courses and subdisciplines of English we evaluated.

To create the new student learning outcomes, the English department utilized best practices in the field by drawing on the April 2014 [“Report of the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment.”](#) published by the Association of Departments of English (ADE). This report includes guidelines for effective assessment of English programs and a list of sample SLOs. The English department selected four of the most relevant SLOs and modified them to fit our student body and the four Highlands traits. By aligning our program with national standards and best practices, the English department will ensure that our students are receiving an education consistent with the latest standards of the field.

### **1) OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT OF LITERATURE COURSES**

#### **Student Learning Outcome 1:**

**Close reading and use of primary and secondary texts:** Students will read attentively, closely, and critically, effectively using primary and/or secondary texts, drawing conclusions and generalities beyond a given text, and offering a clear critical approach in interpreting texts, including traditional written, oral, and visual as well as Web-based texts.

### **NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1**

- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

#### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in literature. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

#### **Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	19	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	90%
Average Score for Outcome	4.0		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:** SLOs 1 and 3 tied for the highest percentage of students meeting them, both at 90%. In recent years, after looking at other outcomes assessment data, department faculty teaching literature have built in more scaffolded instruction on close reading and use of sources, repeating these lessons at every level, not just in introductory-level courses.

### **Student Learning Outcome 2:**

**Mastery of writing:** Students will be able to write clear, grammatically consistent, and rhetorically effective texts, driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument or sequence of ideas.

### **NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2**

- Effective Communication

#### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in literature. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

**Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	18	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	86%
Average Score for Outcome	4.0		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:** This criterion was the lowest of the 3 SLO scores for literature courses, with 86% of students meeting it. Students at NMHU, even those majoring or minoring in English, struggle with the mechanics of writing. Another source of difficulty is producing an original academic argument that has a clear thesis and structure. Some faculty are incorporating multi-modal creation for final projects, and that may allow students options that build their skills in forms of composing that supplement and enhance the traditional MLA-style essay. Unfortunately, SLO 2 doesn’t necessarily align with nontraditional projects.

**Student Learning Outcome 3:**

**Mastery of content, writing, and theory:** Students will respond to and produce academic texts in a way that reflects an awareness of form, theory, or critical approach appropriate to the content area.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3**

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

**First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in literature. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to

all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

### Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	19	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	90%
Average Score on Outcome	4.1		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:** This criterion tests the most sophisticated knowledge of the three SLOs for literature courses. To satisfy it, students must demonstrate mastery of content and theory. With an average score of 4.1 and a success rate of 90%, this is the criterion on which students performed best. The results demonstrate that students are invested in the content in their literature courses and gain a deep understanding of the subject matter.

### Student Learning Outcome 4:

**Mastery of content and context:** Students will understand the role of contexts in production, reception, and transmission of literature, language, and cultural texts across periods, histories, genres, geographic or national spaces, and cultural differences.

### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will ask faculty teaching the required literary surveys (British Literature I; British Literature II; American Literature I, and American Literature II) to submit the scores of English majors or minors on the final exam, or, if there is no final exam, on a final project. The criterion for success will be a score of 80% or higher.

### Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	14	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	18	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	78%

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:** The first time we collected data for survey literature courses was 2020-2021. As such, we're still establishing the baseline for what these data look like. In this case, we were also missing some data from a faculty member who resigned, so not all literature survey courses were included in the sample.

## **2) OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT OF CREATIVE WRITING COURSES**

### **Student Learning Outcome 1:**

**Genre conventions and traditions:** Students will demonstrate the ability to close-read works of creative writing and to understand the nuances and literary influences of the genre(s) in which they are reading and producing work.

### **NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1**

- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

#### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled final portfolios (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in creative writing. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 portfolios. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each product will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

#### **Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	16	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	16	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%
Average Score for Outcome	4.3		

#### **Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:**

In creative writing courses, students are assigned a substantial reading load in addition to composing their own creative works. The purpose of reading professional, published pieces of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction is for students to glean influence, which they incorporate into their own creative works. Based on students’ achievement of this outcomes, it’s clear that combining reading and writing exercises influences students’ writing and allows them an understanding of genre, which they can then incorporate in their own creative works.

### **Student Learning Outcome 2:**

**Mechanics:** Students will achieve precision of mechanics and language in their creative work through engagement with the cycle of composition and revision.

### **NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2**

- Effective Communication

### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled final portfolios (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in creative writing. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 portfolios. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each product will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

### **Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	13	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	16	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	81%
Average Score for Outcome	4.1		

### **Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:**

Mechanics pose one of the largest challenges for our students, not just in English but across the disciplines. In creative writing, mechanics as a learning outcome is more difficult to assess because creativity asks students to be at odds with traditional structures and rules, challenging boundaries and incorporating unorthodox methods.

### **Student Learning Outcome 3:**

**Originality:** Students will produce texts of literary merit that aim to conform to and/or subvert the conventions of the genre(s) in which they are writing, exhibiting originality in style, technique, and voice.

### **NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3**

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

### **First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:**

Each semester the OA coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled final portfolios (“products”) written by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in creative writing. To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 portfolios. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the department chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each product will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

### Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	15	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	1
Total Number of Students Assessed:	16	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	93.8%
Average Score on Outcome	4.1		

### Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

Students generally did well in achieving this SLO, with just one student not meeting the minimum standards for the criterion. Because this is the first reporting cycle for which we've assessed student learning in creative writing, we do not have baseline data to establish a point of comparison. Generally, though, English majors and minors enrolled in creative writing courses at the 3000 level and above are well on their way to degree completion, so it makes sense that we would see high success levels in these courses.

## 3) OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT OF LITERACY, LINGUISTICS, & COMPOSITION COURSES

### Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will be able to **compose** clear, grammatically consistent, and rhetorically effective texts, driven by a purpose and sustained by an ordered, coherent sequence of ideas.

### NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1

- Effective Communication
- Effective Use of Technology

### First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled written, visual, and oral texts ("products") composed individually or collaboratively by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in English (Linguistics, Literacy, and Composition). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the Coordinator should obtain 15-25 texts. The Coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each text will be evaluated by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

### Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	12	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students	12	Percent of Students Meeting	100%

Assessed:		Criterion:	
Average Score on Outcome	4.2		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:** The 2020-2021 academic year was the first time we've collected data for our literacy, linguistics, and composition courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels. As such, we're still establishing a baseline set of data for these courses. Data for the three SLOs in this section came from two classes: Gender and Politics of Literacy in Fall 2020 and Writing As Advocacy in Spring 2021. Students taking these classes were nearly all English majors or minors, and so were invested and interested in the course content.

**Student Learning Outcome 2:**

Students will understand the role of **contexts** in production, reception, and transmission of written, visual, and oral texts across periods, histories, genres, geographic or national spaces, and cultural differences.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1**

- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills
- Effective Use of Technology

**First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:**

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled written, visual, and oral texts ("products") composed individually or collaboratively by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in English (Linguistics, Literacy, and Composition). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the Coordinator should obtain 15-25 texts. The Coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each text will be evaluated by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

**Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	12	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	12	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%
Average Score on Outcome	4.4		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:** The 2020-2021 academic year was the first time we've collected data for our literacy, linguistics, and composition courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels. As such, we're still establishing a baseline set of data for these courses. Data for the three SLOs in this section came from two classes: Gender and Politics of Literacy in Fall 2020 and Writing As Advocacy in Spring 2021. Students



taking these classes were nearly all English majors or minors, and so were invested and interested in the course content.

**Student Learning Outcome 3:**

Students will understand the ideas and methods of the **study** of communicating across genres, modes, and communities.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1**

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

**First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:**

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled written, visual, and oral texts (“products”) composed individually or collaboratively by English majors or minors for 3000- and 4000-level courses in English (Linguistics, Literacy, and Composition). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the Coordinator should obtain 15-25 texts. The Coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each text will be evaluated by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

**Summary of Data**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	12	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	12	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%
Average Score on Outcome	4.4		

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:** The 2020-2021 academic year was the first time we’ve collected data for our literacy, linguistics, and composition courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels. As such, we’re still establishing a baseline set of data for these courses. Data for the three SLOs in this section came from two classes: Gender and Politics of Literacy in Fall 2020 and Writing As Advocacy in Spring 2021. Students taking these classes were nearly all English majors or minors, and so were invested and interested in the course content.

**Utilization of Results:**

The department will continue to collect and analyze data for courses in literature; creative writing; and literacy, linguistics, and composition. Prior to this report, the department had analyzed only data from literature courses. Given our expanded offerings and the popularity of courses in other subdisciplines, we saw fit to assess

student learning in other areas, as well. First-time data collection in these areas is useful only so far as it establishes a baseline for comparison in future semesters. It does, however, show that students are meeting the criteria in those areas.

**Changes to Program Based on Results:**

The main changes we need to make are twofold: 1) To make sure that when second faculty evaluators review the products, they have a copy of the assignment sheet that was provided to students; and 2) For me, as chair, to be better in collecting data immediately after the end of the semester, so that we don't risk losing documents from faculty who resign or do not stay on as contingent instructors in our department. Overall, more intensive analysis would also help us to look at these scores alongside the scores when our assessed courses took place in person. Certainly, the pandemic shifted our learning modalities, and it would behoove us to continue gauging how students in online courses (both synchronous and asynchronous) perform, compared to those who took these courses in person.

**Retention Strategies:**

The place where we have the most to accomplish, in terms of retention, is in our 2000-level survey courses in literature. These are the courses in which students proved least likely to meet the learning outcome (SLO 4). As a department, we've been working closely with our Student Success Coach, Caroline Montoya, including inviting her to department meetings to discuss our department's expectations. Previously, we had begun holding a registration pizza party for students, at which they could have lunch, socialize, and consult faculty as they registered for the next semester's courses. These events were successful in getting students enrolled, but are not a safe practice to continue during the pandemic.