

California State University, Stanislaus
English (MA)
Assessment Report 2008-09 and Plan 2009-10

MISSION

The Department of English supports the University's mission by providing opportunities for our students to develop literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as the knowledge of literature and the aesthetic appreciation expected of culturally literate citizens and future teachers in our public schools.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Provide all Stanislaus students the opportunity to achieve appropriate levels of proficiency in written communication
- Share with our students a rich variety of American, British, and World texts
- Guide our students to develop a broad range of interpretive abilities and analytical skills
- Present the historical, cultural, and technical information necessary for students to become competent readers and scholars
- Assist our students in the continual process of improving formal writing skills
- Provide opportunities for students to practice their oral communication skills
- Support our students as they prepare for and enter into professional life
- Engage prospective teachers in the philosophy and practice of teaching language arts in secondary schools.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Students can demonstrate the following:

1. Mastery of the techniques and practices of literary analysis
2. Familiarity with the history and current theories of literary interpretation
3. Practice of literary research at an advanced level
4. Abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of literature, whether as college teachers or as other professionals

Successful MA students with a Concentration in Literature will...

- Master the techniques and practices of literary analysis (G1,2,5,6)
- Become familiar with the history and current theories of literary interpretation (G1,4,5,6)
- Practice literary research at an advanced level (G1,2,3,4,6)
- Acquire the abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of literature, whether as college teachers or as other professionals (G1,3,5,6)

Successful students with a concentration in Rhetoric and Teaching Writing will...

- Understand the historical development and major theories of rhetoric and composition.
- Master and apply the techniques of rhetorical analysis
- Acquire the abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of composition and rhetoric, whether as teachers or as other professionals.
- The RTW program aims to train teachers equipped to approach writing as a developmental process contingent upon cognitive development and experience occurring within unstable rhetorical situations, socially and intertextually constructed. Teachers should be equipped to address writing from multiple perspectives and through flexible thinking. Their classrooms should become sites where students learn to understand and combat manipulation by institutionalized forms of rhetoric.

Successful students with a concentration in Teaching English to Students with Other Languages will...

- Gain knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts from the areas of linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and language teaching methodology.
- Acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of the interaction between second language acquisition theory and second language teaching and learning
- Demonstrate expertise in curriculum design, assessment, teaching methods, and classroom management in various TESOL settings.
- The goal of the TESOL program is to develop in students a specialist's knowledge in order to teach a second language effectively, including a command of curriculum, of communication and research skills, and of linguistic and psycholinguistic theory, as well as a sensitivity to cross-cultural issues and a positive attitude to the challenges involved in second-language pedagogy.

WHAT DATA WERE COLLECTED AND HOW?

DIRECT

- Grade Point Average
- Comprehensive Exams
- Thesis or special project, optional for students with GPA over 3.5
- Formal department colloquium for presentation of research
- (TESOL) Demonstrate ability to teach a course, speak a foreign language, tutor
- Fall 07 and 08 ENGL 5020: student group projects to develop process to assess oral communication skills and to assess several aspects of educational effectiveness, such as student engagement and progress on SLOs.
- Internally and externally developed rubrics to evaluate presentations

INDIRECT

- Student Exit Survey
- Survey of Area Employers
- Surveys of Student Learning Goals of English Graduate Students
- IDEA Forms and IDEA Group Summary Report 2001-2008
- Spring 2009 external review related to department Academic Program Review

HOW DID FACULTY USE THE DATA? WHEN DID FACULTY MEET TO DISCUSS FINDINGS?

- Monthly faculty meetings; April 27, 2007, English Department Faculty Retreat
- Fall 2007 and 2008: ENGL 5020, student group project to develop process to assess oral communication skills and other aspects of educational effectiveness at the graduate level
- Regular meetings by the English Department Graduate Committee beginning fall of 2009 prioritizing assessment
- Authoring of the English Department Academic Program Review, 2008-09; the process entailed faculty input and meetings
- Continued conversations proceeding from the external review report sent from the visiting team for California State University, Fresno. An example of a topic of immediate interest is the viability of a creative writing concentration in the MA, which the reviewers commented on at some length.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE MADE?

- Faculty developed rubrics for evaluating student presentations. As an assessment plan was developed, it was determined to make curriculum changes to ensure a more systematic concentration on specific learning goals. A new course was launched in Fall 2007 with a student group project to develop process for assessing oral communication.
- Questions about student preparedness and success on the MA examinations in the Literature concentration were raised based on performances from 2006-09. Literature professors on the Graduate Committee met to discuss ways to better prepare students for the exams and to tailor individual exams to specific student interests while ensuring breadth of knowledge. This ad hoc group revised the structure and format of the exam and is prepared to submit the revision for faculty approval.

Assessment of Individual English MA Concentrations

English Literature

Students who successfully navigate the MA Program in Literature will be familiar with the history and most current theories of literary interpretation, and they will have practiced and mastered literary research and analysis at an advanced level. These students will have acquired the abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of literature, whether as college teachers or as other professionals.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Successful MA students with a Concentration in Literature will...

- Master the techniques and practices of literary analysis (G1,2,5,6)
- Become familiar with the history and current theories of literary interpretation (G1,4,5,6)
- Practice literary research at an advanced level (G1,2,3,4,6)
- Acquire the abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of literature, whether as college teachers or as other professionals (G1,3,5,6)

HOW WILL DATA BE COLLECTED?

DIRECT

- Grade point average
- Comprehensive Exams
- Thesis or special project (optional for students with GPA over 3.5)
- Formal department colloquium for presentation of research
- Internally and externally developed rubrics to evaluate presentations

INDIRECT

- Student evaluation of courses

HOW DID FACULTY USE THE DATA? WHEN DID FACULTY MEET TO DISCUSS FINDINGS?

- Monthly faculty meetings; April 27, 2007, English Department Faculty Retreat
- Fall 2007 and 2008: ENGL 5020, student group project to develop process to assess oral communication skills and other aspects of educational effectiveness at the graduate level
- Regular meetings by the English Department Graduate Committee beginning fall of 2009 prioritizing assessment
- Authoring of the English Department Academic Program Review, 2008-09; the process entailed faculty input and meetings

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE MADE?

- Several years ago, faculty administering comprehensive exams realized student essays on these exams were not strong; revised courses to require midterms and finals with similar essay component; in 2009, the structure and administrative procedures for the comprehensive examinations underwent revision
- A new course, ENGL 5020: *Assessment in English*, was developed; graduate students integrate a variety of program assessment efforts as class projects

WERE ANY CHANGES MADE TO THE ASSESSMENT PLAN? IF SO, WHAT WERE THEY?

- Use 2007-09 Strategic Plan as a working document, now focusing on documenting process while maintaining academic freedom
- Currently discussing a single exit survey for all concentrations using the TESOL survey as a model
- Currently discussing development of a checklist for grading comprehensive exams
- Revision of format and structure of the MA exams in Literature has been initiated

English Rhetoric & Teaching Writing

The RTW program aims to train teachers equipped to approach writing as a developmental process contingent upon cognitive development and experience occurring within unstable rhetorical situations, socially and intertextually constructed. Teachers should be equipped to address writing from multiple perspectives and through flexible thinking. Their classrooms should become sites where students learn to understand and combat manipulation by institutionalized forms of rhetoric.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Successful students will...

- Understand the historical development and major theories of rhetoric and composition.
- Master and apply the techniques of rhetorical analysis
- Acquire the abilities necessary to become professionals in the field of composition and rhetoric, whether as teachers or as other professionals.

HOW WILL DATA BE COLLECTED?

DIRECT

- Comprehensive examinations
- Thesis or project (optional for students with GPA over 3.5)
- Capstone project (80-100 page research paper)
- Individual/Group projects
- Embedded Assessment
- Fieldwork/Internship
- Locally developed Exams
- Student Presentations

INDIRECT

- Student surveys (program)
- Employer surveys
- Student evaluation of courses

HOW DID FACULTY USE THE DATA? WHEN DID FACULTY MEET TO DISCUSS FINDINGS?

Monthly faculty meetings; April 27, 2007, English Department Faculty Retreat

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE MADE?

- Several years ago, realized student essays on comprehensive exams were not strong; revised courses to require midterms and finals with similar essay component
- Course 5020 Assessment developed, graduate students integrate program assessment as a class project

WERE ANY CHANGES MADE TO THE ASSESSMENT PLAN? IF SO, WHAT WERE THEY?

- Use 2007-09 Strategic Plan as a working document, now focusing on documenting process while maintaining academic freedom
- Currently discussing a single exit survey for all concentrations using the TESOL survey as a model
- Currently discussing development of a checklist for grading comprehensive exams

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

The goal of the TESOL program is to develop in students a specialist's knowledge in order to teach a second language effectively, including a command of curriculum, of communication and research skills, of linguistic and psycholinguistic theory, as well as a sensitivity to cross-cultural issues and a positive attitude toward the challenges involved in second-language pedagogy. The TESOL program prepares students as "master teachers" in English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language, English Language Development in the schools, or Content-based and SDAIE instruction in the public schools.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Successful students will...

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and theories from the areas of linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and language teaching methodology.
- Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the interaction between second language acquisition theory and second language teaching and learning
- Demonstrate expertise in curriculum design, assessment, teaching methods, and classroom management in various TESOL settings.

HOW IS DATA COLLECTED?

DIRECT

- **Written comprehensive examinations** are required for the MA-TESOL. Students write two essays, one on theories, and one on methods, in a three-hour written test (closed book) administered by a faculty member in the computer lab.
- **Thesis or project** (optional for students with GPA over 3.5). The formal thesis or project is optional in TESOL; however, all TESOL students are required to complete a Capstone Project, an original piece of research into a relevant topic and present it in a "graduate exit" paper of a minimum of 60 pages. That paper is presented as a formal requirement for graduation. The research project is "progressive" and each step must be presented both orally and in writing in five steps during the TESOL Graduate Seminar (English 5800).

- **Formal papers** required in TESOL classes include a “case study,” of 15 to 20 pages in length, on a person’s or persons’ experiences in the acquisition of second language (English 4800); two reports on classroom observations and a statement of educational philosophy that covers TESOL theory and methods (English 4615); a progressive semester paper, of 15 to 20 pages in length, on a topic of the student’s choice that investigates a particular method of teaching or assessment related to TESOL (English 4990); two critical reviews of articles or books that relate to the teaching of grammar (English 4850); a series of written reports on classroom observations of developmental writing, or second or foreign language classes either on or off-campus (English 5870), and a research project conducted and reported in the area of program or course assessment (English 5020) (NOTE: In 4000-level classes that can be counted towards the MA, graduate students are required to do approximately 25% more writing than under graduates.)
- **Individual or group projects** in which students design and deliver language lessons (and written lesson plans) to the class are required in all the TESOL-related classes.
- **Embedded Assessment** is accomplished by the above formal papers, lesson presentations in class (that demonstrate that they can teach), mid-term and final exams and, in most of the TESOL classes, students are required to hand-in written summaries and responses of the key concepts for the course at two-week intervals throughout the semester. To demonstrate their oral communication skills, graduate students are expected, in several classes, to explain/explicate certain theories or methods and to lead class discussions on relevant topics.
- **Fieldwork/Internship** is expected of every TESOL student. Taking a leadership role in the Campus Writing Center, conducting tutorials, is required of all students (English 4600 or 5940). In addition, at least once (in some cases twice or more) students will intern in an ESL class (ESL 1000 or 1005) or an undergraduate TESOL class in which, among other duties, the student will provide written feedback and corrections on students’ work. In some case, students do fieldwork or internships or individual studies off-campus (MJC for example) working under the supervision of a faculty member. These experiences are reported in depth in a written report at the end of the semester.

INDIRECT

- Student surveys (program) and letters from students
- Employer surveys
- Student evaluation of courses (IDEA and department forms)
- Graduate student required exit evaluations
- Graduate students’ informal comments and suggestions (sometimes given in writing)

HOW DID FACULTY USE THE DATA? WHEN DID FACULTY MEET TO DISCUSS FINDINGS?

The two principal TESOL faculty meet on a regular basis to discuss courses, program, students, and outcomes. Faculty in the department communicate among themselves frequently on a one-to-one basis to discuss individual courses or cases. Intensive program evaluations and assessments are conducted as part of the APR at least every seven years, and the English Department has developed (since 2002) a “strategic plan” that responds to ongoing assessment findings and makes changes accordingly. Some issues are discussed at monthly faculty meetings. In April 27, 2007, an English Department Faculty Retreat was held to examine the programs, curricula, and respond to assessment data and update the department strategic plan.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE MADE?

- The work of the PACs has improved assessment of student learning, and the work is recently having some impact on assessment in the department. For example, faculty teaching the senior seminar (which includes TESOL) concluded that there should be a lot more concentration on writing skills, so a rubric was developed to be used to assess student writing in a more thorough, reliable, and valid way. The course was expanded to 4 units to allow for more time to devote to the “writing workshop” approach to learning.
- The department has an in-house evaluation designed to give faculty direct feedback from students concerning individual classes. Several changes have been made in course content or procedures as a result of these evaluations. For example, after many students complained that they were not receiving useful feedback concerning the mechanics of their writing on their bi-weekly summaries and responses in certain classes, TESOL faculty members began to provide such feedback. Also, faculty contacted the Campus Writing center to set up appointments for students who needed extra work on their writing skills.
- Several years ago, assessments indicated that student essays on comprehensive exams were not as strong as desired; courses were revised to require midterms and finals with similar essay components.
- Program assessment related to the APR indicated the lack of an assessment course at graduate level. Consequently, English 5020 Assessment was developed. That course is now required. Students in that course in 2008 conducted several studies related to learning outcomes and the findings were made part of the department APR as well as the campus self study for reaccreditation. Student feedback has indicated a desire for the department to offer a course related to the history of the English language; consequently, the department in 2007 added a graduate course in the History of the English Language, which is now offered in alternate years.

Were any changes made to the Assessment Plan? If so, what were they?

- The 2007-09 Department Strategic Plan is a working document, now focusing on documenting process while maintaining academic freedom. English is one of few departments that have developed an ongoing strategic plan (since 2002) rather than just a seven-year APR. The Assessment Plan will be an integral part of that strategic plan.
- The department is currently discussing a single exit survey for all concentrations using the TESOL survey as a model. Getting the data is essential. The department now requires all graduates to fill out a detailed evaluation in order to obtain their diploma.
- The department is currently discussing development of a checklist and rubric for grading comprehensive exams. The TESOL comprehensives were “take-home” until 2002. Since then, the exam has been given in the computer lab and is closed-book, thus rendering a better assessment of what students actually know.
- The PACs have only been in place for two years, but the focus of the campus PACs on student learning outcomes will help the department to do a better job in direct assessment of learning outcomes. The work of the PACs will contribute to the Department Assessment Plan.

SUMMARY COMMENTARY ON THE GRADUATE PROGRAM OFFERED AS PART OF THE 2009 EXTERNAL REVIEW RELATED TO THE DEPARTMENT’S ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

An external review team conducted a thorough review of the department and its various programs in the spring of 2009. Part of their report is quoted below as a summary statement about the functionality of the MA Program in English:

The Graduate Program at CSU Stanislaus seems healthy, vital, attuned to changes in the discipline, open to student-centered revisions, conscious of regional and local literacy needs, connected to the most up-to-date research in the disciplines that function under the umbrella of English.

We applaud the three concentrations outlined in the APR. The goals and outcomes are representative of mainstream, progressive (if those words can conjoin in one sentence) trends in our field and they match the literacy needs of students in the region, as well as the expertise of the professors who teach in the program. Often such foundational characteristics are taken as a “givens” in a University culture, but, as reviewers, we find that this is not always the case. The level of self-assessment and audience assessment performed by professors in the English department is highly commendable. Without such reflection on the culture and practices of a program and its graduates, progress is slow and often disjointed.