SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Undergraduate Major, Undergraduate Writing Program, Graduate Program	**Department:** English
Degree or Certificate Level: BA, MA, PhD	**College/School:** Arts and Sciences
Date (Month/Year): September 2021	**Assessment Contact:** Toby Benis (Department Chair); Joya Uraizee (Assessment Coordinator); Nathaniel Rivers (Writing Program Director), Rachel Greenwald Smith (Graduate Program Director)

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2020-2021

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2015

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

Undergraduate Writing Program Outcomes Assessed:
WP assessment on hiatus due to pandemic shift to online learning and planning for implementation of ENGL 1900 as Eloquentia Perfecta 1 in the new core curriculum.

Undergraduate Major Outcomes Assessed:
BA Outcome 1, Close Reading: "Students who complete the undergraduate program in English will produce close readings of literary texts and other media that demonstrate an ability to analyze elements such as syntax, word choice, tone, tropes and imagery."

Graduate Program Outcomes Assessed:
Note: due to the pandemic fewer than average assessment artifacts were collected.
MA Learning Objective A, "Students who complete the Master's Program in English will demonstrate a foundational knowledge of literary/rhetorical histories, aesthetics, cultures, and emerging areas of inquiry, including an awareness of cultural diversity within literary traditions"
MA Learning Objective B, "Students who complete the Master's Program in English will demonstrate knowledge of research expectations, and of theoretical approaches, requisite for advanced study in English, including appropriate research resources and tools."
MA Learning Objective C, "Students who complete the Master's Program in English will demonstrate an ability to engage productively with relevant critical debates through written and spoken arguments."
PhD Learning Objective A, "Students who complete the Doctoral Program in English will demonstrate a broad knowledge of literary histories, aesthetics, cultures, and emerging areas of inquiry, including an awareness of cultural diversity within literary traditions."
PhD Learning Objective B, "Students who complete the Doctoral Program in English will demonstrate proficiency in formulating written and spoken arguments situated within a historical or methodological field of study, as defined in the sections of the department's Graduate Handbook covering Ph.D. exams."
PhD Learning Objective D, "Students who complete the Doctoral Program in English will demonstrate the ability to conceptualize, develop, and bring to successful completion an original, sustained, and coherent independent research project (e.g., the dissertation) that contributes to one's field of specialization."

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe and identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Undergraduate Writing Program:

See above (section 1).
<u>Undergraduate Major:</u>
Close Reading (Outcome 1): The Assessment Committee evaluated 50 essay assignments that were submitted by English majors between Fall 2017 and Spring 2020 for courses on the North and Madrid campuses. Of these papers, 15 were in the Cross-Level category (same students, different levels), and 35 were in the By-Level category (different students, same levels).
2 focus group surveys were conducted in Spring 2021 via Zoom with students in the Research Intensive or RIE concentration and with students enrolled in English 4960, the Senior Seminar.
<u>Graduate Program:</u>
Knowledge of histories, aesthetics, cultures (MA Learning Objective A): The Assessment Director evaluated 1 MA exam assessment
Knowledge of research expectations and theoretical approaches (MA Learning Objective B): The Assessment Director evaluated assessments of the performance of 4 MA students in English 5110, Literary Theory (required).
Ability to engage in critical debates (MA Learning Objective C): The Assessment Director collected and evaluated 3 MA student coursework portfolios.
Knowledge of literary histories, aesthetics, cultures (PhD Learning Objective A); and demonstrating proficiency in formulating written and spoken arguments (PhD Learning Objective B): The Assessment Director evaluated 3 PhD exam assessments.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (do not just refer to the assessment plan).

<u>Undergraduate Writing Program</u>:
See above (section 1).
<u>Undergraduate Major</u>:
For academic year 2020-21, the Undergraduate Program Assessment committee consisted of the following people: Dr. Joya Uraizee (Assessment Director), Dr. Anne Stiles, and Dr. Anne Dewey. They were assisted by Ms. Katie Gutierrez, PhD student.
The Assessment Committee members discussed and scored assessment artifacts based on the scales below. The committee reported in written form to the Undergraduate Committee. No report was written about graduate assessment due to the Assessment Director's additional duties (taking over the Undergraduate Program temporarily).
The artifacts received numerical scores: 4 (High Proficiency); 3 (Proficiency); 2 (Competency); 1 (Marginal Competency) and 0 (Does not meet Marginal Competency). Please see appendix for actual rubric used.
<u>Graduate Program</u>:
The Assessment Director read assessment artifacts pertaining to 8 MA students and 3 PhD students as described above. Artifacts about all 11 students were submitted by their mentors or instructors.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

<u>Undergraduate Writing Program:</u>
See above (section 1).
<u>Undergraduate Major</u>
Close Reading (Outcome 1), Assignments: The average rating for all 50 assignments was 3.05 (Proficiency) on a scale of 1–4, with 4 being the highest. While the average rating for the 15 Cross-Level assignments was 2.80 (in between Proficiency and Competency), the average rating for the 35 By-Level assignments was 2.81 (in between Proficiency and Competency). This suggests that our majors may need more training in doing close readings in their written assignments.
<u>Graduate Program</u>:
The 1 MA student's exam assessment indicated that the student had an average foundational knowledge of literary histories and aesthetics; above average foundational knowledge of literary cultures and awareness of cultural

diversities; and excellent foundational knowledge of emerging areas of inquiry. The student also demonstrated above average knowledge of applicable research and theoretical approaches requisite for advanced study in English.

The reports on the 4 MA students who took English 5110 (Literary Theory), a required course for all MA students, indicated that their performance in that class was above average. They showed excellent awareness of cultural diversities; in between excellent and above average foundational knowledge of literary aesthetics, cultures and emerging areas of inquiry; and above average foundational knowledge of literary histories. They also demonstrated excellent knowledge of research and of theoretical approaches to English; as well as above average ability to engage productively with relevant critical debates through written and spoken arguments.

The coursework portfolios submitted by 3 MA students who were about to graduate indicated that their abilities to write solid research papers and annotated bibliographies is good; moreover, two of them have published either a scholarly article or a creative work.

The 3 PhD students' exam and prospectus assessments indicated that one of them, who passed the qualifying exam with distinction, had an excellent knowledge of literary histories, aesthetics, cultures and emerging areas of inquiry; and an above average ability to formulate written or spoken arguments. That student's dissertation prospectus showed excellent original thinking and sustained research and was conceptualized and developed in an above average capacity. The second PhD student, who passed the qualifying exam, showed above average ability to formulate written and spoken arguments. The 3rd PhD student, who also passed the qualifying exam, showed above average ability to formulate written and spoken arguments and average knowledge of literary histories, aesthetics, cultures and emerging areas of inquiry.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions
   What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Undergraduate Writing Program:
See above (section 1).
Undergraduate Major:
In Spring 2021, the Assessment committee wrote a report on its assessment of the Close Reading assignments. It was sent to the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Summer 2021. In the report, the committee indicated that they found it difficult to find artifacts, since no class assigned an exclusively close reading assignment. They also found it difficult to compare assessments across levels, because the assignments were from classes that were very different and without prompts. The committee had to review each assignment and scan for close reading, to determine whether the assignment contained enough close reading elements to assess the close reading proficiency. The committee reports that generally speaking, English majors at the 4000 level perform better than English majors at the 2000 level. The committee recommends including assignment prompts with assignments when assessment data is collected.
Graduate Program:
The Assessment Director's analysis of the assessment reports suggests that MA and PhD students are performing well in their oral/qualifying exams, in the classroom and with regard to their research projects. x

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings
   A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Undergraduate Writing Program:
See above (section 1).
Undergraduate Major:
At the faculty retreat in August 2021, the Assessment Director shared a brief summary of all assessment activities to date, with the department. A separate committee charged with revising the major also gave an update at that retreat, and their work to date indicates that the findings of the assessment committee is informing their work to some extent. In one of its upcoming meetings in Fall 2021, the Undergraduate Committee will discuss the Close Reading Assessment Report that was sent to the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Summer of 2021.
Graduate Program:
At the faculty retreat in August 2021, the Assessment Director shared a brief summary of all assessment activities to date, with the department.

   B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For

example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies	• Course content	• Course sequence
	• Teaching techniques	• New courses
	• Improvements in technology	• Deletion of courses
	• Prerequisites	• Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan	• Student learning outcomes	• Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
	• Artifacts of student learning	• Data collection methods
	• Evaluation process	• Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

> Undergraduate Major:
> The English major is currently being revised and the first step in that process is to revise the outcomes for the major. A separate committee has been set up to do so. That committee will eventually work with the assessment committee when it starts to revise the assessment plan for the major.
> Graduate Program:
> The new MA exam, which resulted from the 2018-2019 assessment cycle, is continuing to be used.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

> Undergraduate Writing Program:
> *See above (section 1).*

7. Closing the Loop: Review of <u>Previous</u> Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

> Undergraduate Writing Program:
> *See above (section 1).*
> Undergraduate Major:
> The need to revise both the major and the assessment plan has been often voiced in the department but in 2021-2022 it will actually take concrete shape.
> Graduate Program:
> The new MA exam format was partially influenced by the 2020-2021 assessment process.

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

> Undergraduate Writing Program:
> *See above (section 1).*
> Undergraduate Major:
> Since the major is currently being revised, and that process has only just started, no assessment of a revised major have taken place yet.
> Graduate Program:
> The impact that the revised MA exam has had on the MA program has not been assessed yet.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

> Undergraduate Writing Program:
> *See above (section 1).*
> Undergraduate Major:
> There are no results as of now. See above.
> Graduate Program:
> There are no results as of now. See above.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

> Undergraduate Writing Program:
> *See above (section 1).*
> Undergraduate Major:
> Until a revised major is in place we will continue to assess the existing major. In 2021-2022, the assessment committee will analyze 3000-level Rhetoric and Argumentation courses.
> Graduate Program:

We will continue to assess the graduate program. In 2021-2022 the assessment committee will assess the MA oral exam, the PhD qualifying exam, graduate student performance in graduate seminars and PhD students' teaching portfolios.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.

[please see the next page]

APPENDIX A:
RUBRIC TO ASSESS CLOSE READING IN ENGLISH MAJORS

Outcome #1: Students who complete the undergraduate program in English will produce close readings of literary texts and other media that demonstrate an ability to analyze elements such as syntax, word choice, tone, tropes and imagery.
Outcome #1 is introduced in our 2000 level topical literature courses, which familiarize students with techniques of close reading; students who complete a 2000-level course should be able to "generate engaged and responsive close readings of texts" (that is, readings that demonstrate awareness of how elements specific to literary language enhance meaning). The practice of close reading should be further developed in 3000-level courses, which pursue exercises in close reading in conjunction with specific inquiries into literary history, genre, rhetoric and cultural critique. By the time they reach advanced 4000-level coursework, English BA students should be able to "produce sophisticated close readings that attend to multiple dimensions of textual complexity."

High Proficiency: 4	Proficiency: 3	Competency: 2	Marginal Competency: 1
demonstrates an ability to analyze multiple dimensions of textual complexity*, including elements such as° syntax, word choice, tone, tropes, and imagery, in a manner that is consistent, nuanced, and sophisticated—and also demonstrates a significant improvement across time or level.	demonstrates an ability to analyze multiple dimensions of textual complexity*, including elements such as° syntax, word choice, tone, tropes, and imagery, in a manner that is consistent, nuanced, and sophisticated—and also demonstrates some improvement across time or level.	demonstrates an ability to analyze multiple dimensions of textual complexity*, including elements such as° syntax, word choice, tone, tropes, and imagery, in a manner that is either: inconsistent, lacking in nuance or sophistication, or shows little improvement over time or level.	demonstrates an ability to analyze dimensions of textual complexity*, including elements such as° syntax, word choice, tone, tropes, and imagery, in a manner that is not only inconsistent or lacking in nuance and sophistication, but also shows no improvement over time or level.

* within specific, concrete literary texts and other media.
° Note: This list of elements is meant not to be exhaustive but to provide a general guidance to the *type of elements* which would demonstrate the student's engagement with "dimensions of textual complexity."

Evaluators should assign a zero (0) to any artifact that does not meet marginal competency (level 1).

WRITTEN COMMENTS / QUALITATIVE REMARKS (*please limit to 300 words*):