

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Undergraduate Program in English

Department: English

Degree or Certificate Level: BA

College/School: Arts & Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2022

Assessment Contact: Jennifer Rust, Associate Chair and Chair of Ad Hoc Major Revision Committee; Ted Mathys, Undergraduate Program Director.

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2021-2022

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

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization? No

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 Major Outcomes Assessed (Current Major)

In 2021-2022, the English major was assessed in two ways.

It was assessed directly by examining student assignments that matched *BA Outcome 4, Rhetoric and Argumentation*, which says this: "Students who complete the undergraduate program in English will produce written and oral arguments about literary works and other media that demonstrate facility with appropriate research methods, clear organization, and awareness of audience."

It was assessed indirectly via *focus groups* with English majors in upper-level English classes about their experiences as majors and within major concentrations.

New Major Development: Student Learning Outcomes

In Fall 2021, the English Department convened a new Ad Hoc Committee to revise the English major. We seek to revise the English major in light of the new university core and in light of several shortcomings of the current major structure that have been highlighted over several years of assessment of the undergraduate program. One significant shortcoming of the current major structure is that it was not originally built around specific student learning outcomes (these were imposed after the fact in 2015, per request from the Provost's Office). Therefore, as the first step in implementing a new major, the Ad Hoc Committee developed a set of new student learning outcomes. After extensive consultation with both the St. Louis and Madrid campuses, these new SLOs were approved by the English faculty:

Student Learning Outcomes for the English Major and Minor
Approved by the Department of English: 23 February 2022

Students who complete the undergraduate program in English at Saint Louis University will be able to:

- Write with clarity, style, and rhetorical precision;
- Describe the relationship between historical contexts and literary and rhetorical works;

- Analyze how form, medium and genre contribute to meaning in a variety of works;
- Use critical and theoretical concepts to connect literary works to larger fields of inquiry;
- Articulate ethical and political implications of literary and rhetorical works for communities beyond the university.

NOTE: these SLOs will apply to all concentrations within the English major (CW, RWT, RIE). A subset of these SLOs (1-3) will also apply to the English minor.

In May 2022, the Ad Hoc Committee developed two potential models for new English majors designed to address these learning outcomes. These major models were presented to the full English faculty for feedback in August 2022; for more details, please see these slides - [Presentation of Two Major Models \(August 2022\)](#). As of September 2022, the Ad Hoc Committee is in the process of continuing to gather feedback from current students and colleagues in Madrid and working to reconcile the two models into a single proposal to be presented to the English faculty for approval. As we develop a new curricular structure, we are regularly engaging in mapping exercises to make sure we are linking BA requirements to the new approved SLOs and identifying places where we can collect artifacts for a more streamlined assessment process.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail and identify the course(s) in which they 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 Major (Current Major)

Rhetoric & Argumentation (Outcome 4): The Assessment Committee evaluated 29 essay assignments that were submitted by English majors. All 29 of the assignments came from the North campus, spanning the Spring 2016 and Fall 2019 terms. 23 of the 29 assignments came from 3000-level courses, while 6 came from 4000-level courses. At the 3000-level, 4 assignments were from English 3854, 13 were from English 3860, and 6 were from English 3890. All 6 of the 4000-level assignments were from English 4020.

Focus Groups: 4 focus group surveys were conducted with English majors. In Fall 2021, 2 in-person focus group meetings were conducted. The first was with 3 English majors in the Research Intensive (RIE) concentration who were enrolled in ENGL 4930, "Special Topics: Spies & Secret Societies" (the RIE seminar). The second was with about 8 senior English majors, who were enrolled in ENGL 4960, "The Senior Seminar: Metaliterature." In Spring 2022, 2 email surveys were conducted. The first was with 4 senior English majors, who were enrolled in ENGL 4960, "The Senior Seminar: Shakespeare and the Uncanny." The second was with 2 English majors in the Creative Writing concentration, who were enrolled in ENGL 4060, "The Craft of Fiction."

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** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Undergraduate Major (Current Major)

Rhetoric & Argumentation (Outcome 4): For academic year 2021-22, the Undergraduate Program Assessment committee consisted of the following people: Dr. Joya Uraizee (Assessment Director), Dr. Allen Brizee, Dr. Toby Benis, and Dr. Anne Dewey. They were assisted by Mr. John 'Myles' Hesse, PhD student.

The Assessment Committee members met 4 times in 2021-2022 to discuss and score assessment artifacts based on the scales below. In Spring 2022, the committee reported in written form to the Undergraduate Committee. 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.

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)?

Undergraduate Major (Current Major)

Rhetoric & Argumentation (Outcome 4): The average rating for all 29 assignments was 2.71 (Proficiency) on a scale of 1–4, with 4 being the highest. This suggests that English majors are fairly good at using research methods, at organizing their writing, and at recognizing the needs of their audiences, as they craft written and oral arguments about literary works and other media.

Focus Groups: The results of the 2 surveys with senior English majors in the 2 Senior Seminar classes suggest that while they are able to generate theoretical analyses of literary/rhetorical texts, they struggled to do so in their lower level courses. The majors suggested requiring a lower-level course in literary theory, as well as more practice, in lower-level courses, writing longer research papers. The English majors in the Research-Intensive Concentration (RIE), who were surveyed, indicated that the RIE seminars prepared them to write long research projects. They agreed that many English classes required some kind of original research. The students in the Creative Writing concentration, who were surveyed, indicated that their creative writing courses taught them the skills necessary for future success, and that they were given lots of practice writing in multiple genres. They found the workshop-style format of their creative writing classes to be very conducive to learning.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Undergraduate Major (Current Major)

Rhetoric & Argumentation (Outcome 4): In Spring 2022, the Assessment committee wrote a report on its assessment of the Rhetoric & Argumentation assignments. It was sent to the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Summer 2022. In the report, the committee indicated that it was difficult to assess some of the assignments for Rhetoric and Argumentation given that several submitted assignments did not appear to address the outcomes for Rhetoric and Argumentation. Moreover, the creative assignments tended to score very low on the scale, because it was particularly difficult to match them to the outcomes. Overall, while some assignments were stylistically competent, their arguments were not geared toward specific audiences and contexts. The committee recommended including assignment prompts with all assignments when assessment data is collected.

Focus Groups: The results of the 4 focus groups were sent to the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the chair of the Ad Hoc Major Revision Committee. Taken together, they indicate the need for more instruction in literary/rhetorical theory, as well as longer writing assignments, in lower-level English courses; and that small majors-only classes, that use workshop-style pedagogies, meet these needs best.

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?

The results of both the assessment of Rhetoric and Argumentation courses and the student focus groups were received and discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Major Revision in Spring 2022. A general sense of these results was also shared with the full English faculty as part of the discussion of new major models during the August 2022 English faculty retreat; these results informed our discussions about optimal strategies for revising the major.

Furthermore, the assessment report on Rhetoric and Argumentation was reviewed and discussed by the English Undergraduate Committee on September 7, 2022. The committee discussed the larger ongoing assessment process and the possible need to revise departmental rubrics (literary rubric; various assessment rubrics) going forward, as we found that our current rubrics had some unclear criteria, such as "sophistication." Committee also discussed improvements to the mode of assessment in the new major, such as modifying the heavily quantitative, delayed (some of the Outcome 4 artifacts were from 2016) approach to a simplified approach that focuses on key major courses under a new major and/or one that blends assessment with peer review of teaching.

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
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

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

As noted in Box 1, the English Department is in the midst of a process of major revision that has been informed by several cycles of assessment over the last few years. While we finalized our new SLOs before the Rhetoric and Argument component assessment and focus groups were completed, this assessment data has fed into our efforts to develop and weigh new curricular models. In particular, we are seeking to address the perceived need for more robust writing assignments and theory coverage highlighted in student focus groups in our new curricular designs for the English major. This work is currently ongoing as of September 2022.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

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

Please see Box 1 above: the English Department developed a new set of SLOs in 2022, a process that was shaped in part by years of assessment data on the current major, dating back to 2016. As noted previously, we are now in the process of building a curricular architecture around these new SLOs. The major models that we developed in May 2022 and are currently working to reconcile have incorporated several of the recommendations of the assessment committee, going

back several years. These include: the inclusion of a lower level seminar for English majors, a lower level literary theory course, and a degree of flexibility for majors to chart their own track within the major.

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

Since the work of developing a new major is ongoing, we have not yet implemented assessment strategies. That said, as we develop our new major, we are mindful of the need to develop adequate assessment methods. Both of our new major models envision a portfolio process for students which would begin with an early “gateway course” where students would begin to assemble a portfolio and end with a capstone seminar where portfolios would be completed and collected. We believe this will be a more streamlined and efficient means of collecting assessment artifacts than the process we have been using since 2015, which has involved collecting a number of papers from multiple lower level classes.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

N/A

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

Please see responses above in Box 1 and Box 7A and 7B.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, 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.

APPENDIX 1: RUBRIC TO ASSESS IN ENGLISH MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOME 4

English Major Outcome #4: “Graduates will be able to produce written and oral arguments about literary works and other media that demonstrate facility with appropriate research methods, clear organization and awareness of audience.”

Note that in the following table, “text” refers to a written essay, oral presentation, or work in other media (website, podcast, etc.), and “writer” and “reader” refer respectively to the producer and consumer of the text.

High Proficiency: 4	Proficiency: 3	Competency: 2	Marginal Competency: 1
<p>The text makes a persuasive, engaging case. There is a strong thesis statement. The argument is sophisticated, appropriate for the intended audience, and includes perspectives readers might have not considered.</p> <p>Evidence to support the argument is sufficient, well-chosen, synthesized, and presented fairly and accurately through quotations, paraphrases, summaries, and/or visual or auditory elements.</p> <p>Logical connections between ideas are evident. The writer identifies and reckons with conflicts and contradictions in the evidence, demonstrating critical thought and a solid grasp of the interpretive and conceptual tasks required by the assignment.</p> <p>Complex ideas are conveyed with clarity. Text follows a clear organizational structure. Language, tone, visual and/or auditory elements are carefully crafted with a specific audience in mind. Writing mechanics follow conventions.</p>	<p>The text makes a persuasive case. There is a clear thesis statement. The argument is appropriate for the assignment and the intended audience.</p> <p>Evidence to support the argument is sufficient and is presented fairly and accurately through quotations, paraphrases, summaries, and/or visual or auditory elements.</p> <p>Logical connections between ideas are present. The writer identifies some conflicts and contradictions in the evidence, demonstrating understanding of the assignment, but may have some factual or conceptual inconsistencies.</p> <p>Ideas are conveyed with clarity. Text follows a clear organizational structure. Language, tone, visual and/or auditory elements are crafted with a specific audience in mind. Writing mechanics follow conventions.</p>	<p>The text makes a clear case. There is an identifiable thesis statement. The argument is appropriate for the assignment and the intended audience.</p> <p>Evidence to support the argument is in use. More evidence may be needed at points; ambiguity may exist as to how evidence fits with the text’s overall argument; or quotations, paraphrases, summaries, and/or visual or auditory elements may be integrated unevenly.</p> <p>Logical connections between some ideas are present. The writer may miss contradictions in evidence and/or have some factual, interpretive, or conceptual errors.</p> <p>Ideas are conveyed with an attention to organization, but the organizational structure of the text may not always be clear and logical. Language, tone, visual and/or auditory elements have a specific audience in mind. There are some lapses in the writing mechanics.</p>	<p>The text has trouble making a case. The thesis statement may be absent, not fully formed, or inappropriate for the assignment and intended audience.</p> <p>Evidence to support the argument may be insufficient, inappropriate, or not well-chosen. The use of quotations, paraphrases, summaries, and/or visual or auditory elements may be inaccurate or presented unfairly.</p> <p>Logical connections between ideas may be missing or ideas may be undeveloped. Even when evidence is appropriate, the text may not use that evidence in a way that demonstrates an awareness of critical argument. There may be significant factual, interpretive, or conceptual errors.</p> <p>Ideas are not conveyed with consistent clarity or organization. Language, tone, visual and/or auditory elements limit the engagement of the intended audience. There are significant lapses in the writing mechanics.</p>

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):*