STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: AMY SCOTT-DOUGLASS
DATE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2014
BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED: Electronic copies of the written projects are collected by the graduate director and stored in a Google Doc folder.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Year of Assessment</th>
<th>Year of Next Planned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Multimedia Work 1. Graduate students will create a strong written presentation of an argument demonstrating clarity of organization, grace of expression, and awareness of audience.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Multimedia Work 2. Graduate students will create substantial academic projects that demonstrate the ability to analyze source material from specific theoretical approaches.</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Multimedia Work 3. Graduate students will create substantial academic projects that approach primary source material in a nuanced, concrete manner to develop an original argument.</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Multimedia Work 4. Graduate students will create substantial academic projects that demonstrate mastery of the subject and informed consideration of its historical, cultural and/or critical context.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Multimedia Work 5. Graduate students will fully and professionally acknowledge the use of all forms of intellectual property, drawing on the parameters of a particular disciplinary community.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation 1A. Graduate students [who choose the practicum option] will identify and articulate how coursework in the humanities informs the practicum experience.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation 1B. Graduate students [who choose the thesis option] will articulate the significance of sustained scholarly work in the humanities.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation 2. Graduate students will present complex arguments, ideas, and/or experiences in a logical, well-organized manner.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation 3. Graduate students will craft professional and engaging presentations tailored to specific audiences in the most appropriate format for the purpose.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
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Oral Presentation 4. Graduate students will fully and professionally acknowledge the use of all forms of intellectual property, drawing on the parameters of a particular disciplinary community.

Teaching 1. Graduate students will be able to apply pedagogical theories and research to college teaching practice.

Teaching 2. Graduate students will be able to evaluate pedagogical theories, research, and practice.

Teaching 3. Graduate students will be able to generate ethical and effective classroom research that evaluates college teaching practices and college student learning.

Teaching 4. Graduate students will be able to apply theory and research to new college teaching situations.

Retired Outcome 1. Graduate students write substantial academic essays which show an understanding of literary theory and the ability to analyze a literary text from a specific theoretical approach. *When appropriate, can be applied to research essay presentations.

Retired Outcome 2. Graduate students write substantial academic essays that draw on a significant body of critical commentary and scholarship in addition to the primary text. *When appropriate, can be applied to research essay presentations.

Retired Outcome 3. Graduate Students write essays in a style that is clear, well-organized, fluent, and suitable for an academic audience. *When appropriate, can be applied to research essay presentations.

Retired Outcome 4. Graduate students consistently and correctly follow the guidelines of a specific style manual: either MLA or Chicago. Their work incorporates material from primary and secondary sources honestly and appropriately.

2. Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s Mission, Strategic Plan, and relevant school plan:

Graduate Studies in English and Humanities fosters academic excellence in the liberal arts and helps to prepare students for master’s-level careers in fields such as academia, publishing, communications, grant/professional writing, government, and the non-profit sector. The program offers students two degree/graduation options—the Master of Arts degree in English and Humanities, and the graduate certificate in Teaching English at Community Colleges.
We designed our student learning outcomes to measure our students’ abilities to think critically, contextually and originally; to analyze thoroughly; to research and document fully; to present ideas succinctly and clearly; and to argue persuasively—both in writing and in speech. Across the board, these outcomes relate directly to Marymount’s mission to emphasize academic excellence and scholarship within the liberal arts tradition. Given that the Graduate English and Humanities Program’s outcomes focus on developing advanced mastery of the very practical and hirable skills of reading, analyzing, researching, writing, and speaking, our outcomes also support the University’s dedication to providing learning opportunities that will aid students in career preparation and professional development. We measure our commitment to diversity not only in our curricula development but also in our adherence to the standard expressed in our measurable outcomes that our students approach the subjects that they study contextually, thoroughly, and via multiple perspectives; and we demonstrate our commitment to teaching high standards of ethics in ways such as the importance we give to assessing our students’ mastery of documentation practices.

Our assessment practices support Marymount’s strategic plan even in the types of documents that we use to measure student learning outcomes. These include substantial student writing projects (each of which is between 15-50 pages of sustained master’s-level, argument-driven, research-informed writing) and oral presentations (each of which is between 15-60 minutes in length). The oral presentations in particular serve to promote a sense of community amongst students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Since oral presentations are open to the public—thesis presentations in particular are often attended by students’ families, friends, past teachers and mentors, and potential recruits to our program—our means of assessing student learning serves to strengthen Marymount’s ties to the larger community, promote greater awareness of Marymount, enhance its reputation, and strengthen recruitment and retention.

In addition to the University’s mission and strategic plan, our student learning outcomes support several specific aspects of the School of Arts and Sciences’ strategic plan. In our outcomes that measure our students’ effectiveness in new college teaching situations and hold them to standards of subject mastery and informed consideration of their subject in historical, cultural, and critical context, we are supporting the use of resources in the local Washington D.C. area and we are also emphasizing interdisciplinarity. Our outcomes that measure our students’ oral and written presentations of the work they have done in their practicums reinforce the School’s commitment to provide students with opportunities to gain real-world experience. And every thesis and seminar paper is a student research effort that is conducted under close faculty supervision.

Our outcomes were designed with the intention of us being able to ensure that the Graduate Studies in English and Humanities curricula is rigorous, cohesive, and integrated, and to measure our program’s ability to produce superior graduates who are able to succeed in their positions and communities.

3. Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements:

This year, we assessed 22 written projects, a significant increase from 9 written projects in 2008 and 1 written project in 2010. The projects included:
5 final seminar papers in HUM 524: Myth, Symbol, and Language (these averaged 15-20 pages)
10 final seminar papers in EN 590: Major Authors (these averaged 15-20 pages)
2 EN/HUM 690 Master’s Project (thesis; these average 40-50 pages)
5 EN/HUM 695 Master’s Practicum written reports (these average 20 pages)

A total of six graduate faculty members participated in the assessment process. These graduate faculty came from three departments: English, History, and Philosophy. Each paper was assessed by at least two different faculty members.

We asked faculty to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being lowest and 5 being highest, the extent to which

* Graduate students created substantial academic projects that demonstrated the ability to analyze source material from specific theoretical approaches,

and

* Graduate students created substantial academic projects that approached primary source material in a nuanced, concrete manner to develop an original argument.

The process was as follows: the outgoing graduate director, Dr. Tonya Howe, began the assessment process by gathering the writing projects in electronic form. She then shared the papers with full-time, tenure-track members of the department via Google Docs, along with an online rating survey listing outcomes and score ranges. The professor who taught the course was not eligible to assess the papers; otherwise, all full-time, tenure-track graduate faculty were invited to participate.

Each written project had a minimum of 2 readers. Faculty received assessment rubrics to evaluate the written projects, and we discussed standards and expectations prior to rating. Scores were tabulated on online surveys provided by Institutional Effectiveness. As in previous years, we used a 5-point scale:

1 = fulfills the outcome inadequately
3 = fulfills the outcome adequately
5 = fulfills the outcome systematically, at a sophisticated level
The outgoing graduate director identified the two outcomes that would be assessed in this report and requested the data to measure those two outcomes from Institutional Effectiveness. Before beginning her sabbatical, she then met with the incoming graduate director. The incoming graduate director analyzed the data and wrote this report.

The many strengths of our assessment process this year include the amount of assessable materials gathered by the outgoing graduate director, the participation of graduate faculty from three disciplines in English and Humanities, and the measures in place to ensure increased accuracy and measurability in the assessment process.

One challenge for the new graduate director in writing this report was that the Graduate Program in English and Humanities went from having 4 outcomes in its last report to having 13 outcomes in this report, and yet only 2 outcomes were chosen to be assessed and have data reported. The list of outcomes grew as a result of the outgoing director having revised the outcomes at the suggestion of UAC (rewriting 4 outcomes into 9) and as a result of the addition of TECC to Graduate Studies in English in Humanities (which added 4 outcomes). Although it is an effective practice to target select outcomes to assess each year, the new graduate director will plan to assess more than 2 outcomes in the next report, in order to be more proportionate relative to the greater number of outcomes overall. At the same time, we may want to consider the possibility of streamlining the outcomes, now that all components of the program are fully represented. It could be the case that the new list of outcomes is, in practice, too unwieldy. It may be possible, for instance, to combine the 4 teaching outcomes into 1-2 outcomes and to combine the 4 Oral Presentation outcomes into 1-2 outcomes. It may not be advisable to indicate “Multimedia” as an option when assessing student writing. And it may be the case that there is a duplicate focus on “argument” in the new writing outcomes 1 and 3. The graduate faculty in English and Humanities will discuss focusing and narrowing the outcomes accordingly.

It is also worth noting that TECC was assessed in a separate report this past Spring. This choice was made because TECC was a newly designed certificate and there was only one TECC course offered in that year. Ideally, TECC outcome assessment will come under this report for Graduate Studies in English and Humanities, and it will not be reported separately. Although it is a specific curriculum route to graduation, TECC is not a separate program per se—the courses in the TECC track are also taken by MA students, and we have students who are working toward both an MA degree in English/Humanities and a TECC certificate, simultaneously.

The planned improvements for the next assessment, then, are: 1.) to integrate the TECC assessment fully under the umbrella of Graduate Studies in English and Humanities assessment, 2.) to consider the possibility of streamlining the outcomes now that all components of the Program are fully represented, and 3.) to collect data that will assess at least 1/3 of the Program’s combined outcomes every year.
4. Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

As she anticipated in her last assessment report, this past year the outgoing graduate director worked diligently to rewrite the Learning Outcomes to reflect the demands of a flexible, multi-track program with an internship practicum option and required presentational expertise. She also worked closely with Institutional Effectiveness to ensure that the Program refined the effectiveness of our assessment form, taking it from multiple forms (from when the English and Humanities components had separate graduate directors) to one form.

Her previous planned improvements included: a.) widening the scope of assessment to include more representative written work across the program’s offerings, b.) addressing the program’s policy on incompletes, particularly regarding completion of the thesis project. c.) providing an electronic repository of student theses, d.) scheduling formal master’s projects presentations and inviting other faculty and students, e.) more fully developing our connection with NOVA and highlighting our role in preparing community college teachers, and f.) exploring the possibility of offering intensive summer programs for teachers.

In response to the previous years’ problem of incomplete theses, it was determined that current procedures were dealing adequately with thesis preparation since overall results from the thesis process were very good this year. One student whose thesis adviser left the university has been re-assigned to a new director and is in the process of completing the thesis this semester. Otherwise, 2013-2014 resulted in 6 thesis and practicum presentations, which took place during exam weeks and were open to the Marymount community. Given these results, we determined that there was no need to explore the possibility of adding a course to EN 695 and HUM 695 along the lines adopted by Interior Design, as was suggested in the last report. Our students’ completed theses, and the written component of our students’ practicum projects, continue to be uploaded to the WRLC’s institutional repository (http://muir.wrlc.org/), a process also begun by Dr. Howe.

Plans to “actively wor[k] on recruiting strategies” for TECC certificate students began, with the English department representatives meeting in-person with faculty at NOVA to discuss the program and establish our target recruitment population. Certainly the certificate has garnered the attention of applicants, but putting an active recruitment plan into effect—initiated by the program director and supported by Graduate Admissions—still remains to be done. Recruitment for both the TECC and the MA is the number one priority of the new program director.

5. Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:
(List each recommendation and provide a specific response to each).

We underwent program review in 2012-13, which means that the most recent assessment report with feedback from the UAC came with our 2011-12 report.
UAC recommended that the Learning Outcomes be revised. In response, Dr. Howe rewrote the Learning Outcomes.

UAC recommended that the criteria included in the assessment form link directly to the Learning Outcomes. In response, Dr. Howe ensured that the criteria replicated the language in the revised Learning Outcomes verbatim.

The UAC also recommended that we include indirect measures of outcomes in our reports. Some of our graduate students' successes in 2013-2014 include:

* Brandon Biller (MA graduate, Summer 2014) – admitted to the PhD program at George Mason University
* Amy Flessert (MA/TECC graduate, Summer 2014) –
  presented a conference-length version of her graduate seminar paper “Return to Whorf: Can and Should We Revive Linguistic Relativity?” at the 3rd Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Conference at Georgetown University
  presented a conference-length version of her graduate seminar paper “Analyzing Gender Performance and Sexuality in *Twelfth Night* and *She’s the Man*” at Marymount’s Student Research Conference
  chosen as Marymount Graduate Commencement student speaker and Outstanding Graduate Student
  offered/accepted a full-time instructorship in English Composition at NOVA as a direct result of our TECC program
* Channon Fulton (MA graduate, Spring 2014; continuing TECC student) – presented her graduate seminar paper “*The School for Scandal*: Gossip Then and Popular Media Now” at the Virginia Humanities Conference at Longwood University
* Richard Henkle (MA student, anticipating Spring 2016 graduation) – presented a conference-length version of his graduate seminar paper “With This Ring I Thee Wed: Marriage in Mary Pix’s *The Beau Defeated* (1700)” at the College of William and Mary’s Graduate Research Symposium
* Ellen Kay (MA graduate, Fall 2013) – awarded The Sean Robert Hoare Thesis Award for Best Master’s Thesis for “Grammar Instruction at the Community College: Does It Function ‘Functionally’?”
* Elizabeth Ricketts (MA/TECC student, anticipating Spring 2016 graduation) – presented a conference-length version of her graduate seminar paper "The Not So Gilded Age: Capitalism, Hypocrisy, and Greed in Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton's 'Who Would Have Thought It?'" at Marymount's Student Research Conference
Learning Outcome #2 for Writing/Multimedia Work:
Graduate students will create substantial academic projects that demonstrate the ability to analyze source material from specific theoretical approaches.

Is this outcome being reexamined? Yes X
If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

Technically speaking, all of our Learning Outcomes are new, given that they were rewritten and renumbered this year. However, of our newly written outcomes the Theory outcome is one that was not significantly rephrased or modified this year, and so it is possible to include a comparison of previous years’ assessment reports.

Graduate Studies in English and Humanities focused on students’ learning in Theory in the reports submitted in years 2008 and 2010.

In 2008, 9 papers were assessed. Assessment took place in the form of lengthy discussions at a meeting, with faculty assessors referring to the extensive “notes” they had taken, and “several” of the students’ performances in the category of Theory were deemed “sophisticated.” The program director at the time, Dr. Lillian Bisson, predicted in her report that the development of the course EN 502 (which became a requirement for all master’s students in 2008) would increase our curriculum’s “focus on literary theory.”

In 2010, the report on the Theory outcome was based on, in the words of Dr. Sean Hoare (then program director of graduate studies in Humanities), “close assessment of one paper;” a master’s thesis with a focus on law and literature. The mean score was 3.33. Two raters assigned 4’s and the third rater assigned a 2. Given that these numbers were based upon only one document, the results cannot be said to have been conclusive.

A comparison between the reports assessing the Theory outcome shows the remarkable efforts and the incredible success of Dr. Howe to bring our program’s assessment practices in line. We have gone from collecting limited data (9 papers in 2008 and 1 thesis in 2010) to collecting a sizable amount of data that accurately represents our student population (47 assessor responses to 22 papers, theses, and practicum reports in 2013-2014 compared to 3 assessor responses to 1 thesis in 2010), with the result being that in this report, as in past reports by Dr. Howe, we have been able to report specific numbers that measure our students’ learning with increased accuracy.
**Assessment Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Performance Standard</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |

**Direct Measure:** 22 written projects—5 graduate seminar papers from HUM 524, 10 graduate seminar papers from EN 590, 5 practicum reports, and 2 theses, rated by multiple graduate faculty across three Humanities disciplines with a shared rubric (See Appendix)

The form uses five levels of measurement, from 1-5, with a rating of "3" equivalent to "fulfills the outcome adequately." (See Appendix)

Both HUM 524 and EN 590 are seminars taught by tenure-track graduate faculty in English and Humanities. EN 590 is our “over/under” course, which enrolls advanced undergraduate seniors as well as graduate students. The 22 written projects collected were all from graduate students in English and Humanities.

1. Six readers provided 46 assessment responses to 22 written projects, with a minimum of two readers per written project. Readers used the same assessment rubric for all written projects to ensure uniform criteria.

2. The mean score was 3.13. The graduate program deems any score of 3.0 or higher to be acceptable. Thirteen assessment responses indicated a written project with a performance in this outcome in the two lowest categories, 17 responses assessed a written project as surpassing adequate standards, and 16 responses indicated a written project that fulfilled the outcome adequately.

**Indirect Measures:**

Endorsement of the quality of the students' work on the part of the larger academic community

Acceptance at research conferences and acceptance to doctoral programs

Information is collected as our students' progress through the program and also after graduation

In 2013-2014, our graduate students' academic writing that developed from their graduate seminars was accepted for presentation at Marymount’s SRC as well as conferences at Georgetown, William and Mary, and Longwood University. Additionally, one of our graduates was accepted into the PhD program at George Mason University.

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students:**

Without question, “Theory” is the most challenging component of graduate studies in English and Humanities, to the extent that it could be said that the ability to grasp and be able to apply Theory may be the most significant distinction between undergraduate studies and graduate studies.
With 15 seminar papers and at least 2 faculty assigned to assess each paper, having 5 responses in the lowest category indicates that we had 1 or 2 students who consistently performed at below acceptable standards for this particular outcome in 2013-2014. These numbers align with the number of students we have on academic probation. Their performance in the Fall 2014 semester will determine whether they can stay in the program.

What is especially remarkable about our students’ assessment results in the Theory category is not that we have a student or two who does not perform well when it comes to applying Theory in his or her Literature and Humanities seminar papers—Theory is difficult. What is remarkable is that we have a significantly larger population of students who are absolutely thriving under our instruction when it comes to Theory. It is a very positive mark of our program’s success that we have 17 responses indicating a written project that surpasses the standard for the Theory outcome. What is additionally significant is that, without exception, not a single one of these written projects was composed as part of our Theory seminar—EN 502. In fact, at least half of the students assessed had taken EN 502 the year prior. This indicates: 1. Once our students “get” Theory, they are retaining their knowledge even a year after they have taken our major course in it, and 2. Our graduate faculty are helping our graduate students to retain their knowledge of Theory by incorporating it into Literature and Humanities graduate seminars, and our students are continuing to demonstrate their knowledge of Theory in their theses and practicum reports.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

The required Theory course for our MA candidates is one of the strengths of our graduate program’s curriculum. Although almost all PhD programs in English and Humanities expect their students to be able to comprehend and apply Theory, it is not necessarily a requirement in master’s programs. Our graduates’ solid understanding of Theory gives them a significant edge in their applications for doctoral study.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

The assessment results for this outcome indicate that our curriculum is strong in the area of Theory and not in need of modification. We will continue with the plan to offer EN 502 (in the Spring 2015 course rotation) as a requirement for our students seeking the master’s degree.
Learning Outcome #3 for Writing/Multimedia Work:
*Graduate students will create substantial academic projects that approach primary source material in a nuanced, concrete manner to develop an original argument.*

Is this outcome being reexamined? No

Technically speaking, all of our Learning Outcomes are new, given that they were rewritten and renumbered this year. This outcome (Analysis) is one that is new this year to the extent that its equivalent cannot be singled out for comparison on previous years’ assessment reports.

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program. N/A

### Assessment Activity

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The form uses five levels of measurement, from 1-5, with a rating of "3" equivalent to "fulfills the outcome adequately." (See Appendix)

Both HUM 524 and EN 590 are seminars taught by tenure-track graduate faculty in English and Humanities. EN 590 is our "over/under" course, which enrolls advanced undergraduate seniors as well as graduate students. The 22 written projects collected were all from graduate students in English and Humanities.

1. Six readers provided 47 assessment responses to 22 written projects, with a minimum of two readers per written project. Readers used the same assessment rubric for all written projects to ensure uniform criteria.

2. The mean score was 3.47. The graduate program deems any score of 3.0 or higher to be acceptable. No written project fell into the lowest category, and 22 responses assessed a written project as exceeding the standard, with 10 responses (more than 20% of the students’ work) at the highest score of 5.

**Indirect Measures:** Endorsement of the quality of the students’ work on the part of the larger academic community.

Acceptance at research conferences and acceptance to doctoral programs.

Information is collected as our students’ progress through the program and also after graduation.

In 2013-2014, our graduate students’ academic writing that developed from their graduate seminars was accepted for presentation at Marymount’s SRC as well as conferences at Georgetown, William and Mary, and Longwood University. Additionally, one of our graduates was accepted into the PhD program at George Mason University.
Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students:

More than 20% of our graduate students ranked in the highest category as far as being able to demonstrate, through writing, their ability to analyze at a sophisticated and advanced level, and 47% of our graduate students placed in the top two categories. These are high numbers, and they indicate that our program is strong in this area.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

As the outgoing program director articulated in the last assessment report, our program strength is based on the extent to which we require sustained, revised written argumentation, giving students many opportunities to practice and improve.

It is worth noting that the last assessment report indicated the outgoing graduate director’s intention to collect essays from courses taught in the Humanities track by Humanities faculty as well as the written work coming out of the practicums. She did just that, and in this current report, the results include the assessment of those additional materials.

Under Dr. Howe’s direction, the breadth and depth of our assessment practices have become one of the strengths of our program.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

These are solid scores, and we do not plan any significant revision to our curriculum or program. The primary goal will be to increase publicity, so that more potential recruits learn about the high-quality graduate education that they can get at Marymount.

A complete student learning assessment report includes appendix of rubrics, survey questions, or other relevant documents and information.