

Assessment Plan: Literature

To determine the effectiveness of the department's academic program, the Literature Emphasis in the English BA/BS degrees developed an assessment plan built around measuring student work vis-à-vis three key learning objectives.

Literature collects annual data from the academic year (spring semester, fall semester) by gathering senior papers from its courses and designating faculty readers from its curriculum committee to assess the student work in relation to the key learning objectives. Each emphasis evaluates the papers and posts its [Outcomes Data](#) on the department's assessment website. Each emphasis then makes decisions on the basis of this data and delineates its **Data-Based Decisions** on the assessment website. Along with this direct measure of student learning, Literature also employs an indirect measure, student interviews, as well.

For the Literature Emphasis in the department's BA/BS degrees, the three key [Learning Objectives](#) are:

1. Reach compelling conclusions through the development of critical arguments, professional documents, or creative texts
2. Weigh alternative systems of thought or approaches, recognizing their assumptions and implications
3. Communicate ideas effectively through writing

PART 1 of 2: DIRECT MEASURES (Rubric of Student Work)

The faculty committee uses the following three rubrics to score the skill levels of the students.

1. Reach compelling conclusions through the development of critical arguments, professional documents, or creative texts

Unacceptable:	Marginal:	Acceptable:	Exceptional:
Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is not provided, is unconvincing, or very incomplete	Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is provided, but it is weak or incomplete	Evidence shows that the student has generally attained the objective	Evidence demonstrates that the student has mastered this objective at a high level
Student work does not demonstrate a basic understanding of how to reach compelling conclusions in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to a conclusion • Conclusion is convincing • Provides textual support of the conclusion 	Work shows evidence that the student understands how to reach compelling conclusions, but execution of the concept is weak or incomplete in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to a conclusion • Conclusion is convincing • Provides textual support of the conclusion 	Work shows evidence that the student understands how to reach compelling conclusions and does so with competence in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to a conclusion • Conclusion is convincing • Provides textual support of the conclusion 	Work shows evidence that the student not only understands how to reach compelling conclusions but also does so at a highly proficient level, as defined by these specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to an original and convincing conclusion • Artfully presents textual support of the conclusion • Anticipates and compellingly addresses potential resistances on the part of the reader

2. Weigh alternative systems of thought or approaches, recognizing their assumptions and implications

Unacceptable:	Marginal:	Acceptable:	Exceptional:
Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is not provided, is unconvincing, or very incomplete	Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is provided, but it is weak or incomplete	Evidence shows that the student has generally attained the objective	Evidence demonstrates that the student has mastered this objective at a high level
Student work does not demonstrate a basic understanding of alternative approaches in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to alternative approaches • Refers to the assumptions behind the approaches • Refers to implications of the approaches 	Work shows evidence that the student understands alternative approaches, but execution of the concept is weak or incomplete in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to alternative approaches • Refers to the assumptions behind the approaches • Refers to implications of the approaches 	Work shows evidence that the student understands the concept of writing for an audience and does so with competence in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to alternative approaches • Refers to the assumptions behind the approaches • Refers to implications of the approaches 	Work shows evidence that the student not only understands alternative approaches but also does so at a highly proficient level, as defined by these specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to alternative approaches in a way that is particularly compelling, engaging, or artful • Refers to the assumptions behind the approaches in a way that lends new insight into the approach • Refers to implications of the approaches in a way that is particularly compelling, engaging, or artful

3. Communicate ideas effectively in writing

Unacceptable:	Marginal:	Acceptable:	Exceptional:
<p>Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is not provided, is unconvincing, or very incomplete</p>	<p>Evidence that the student has mastered this objective is provided, but it is weak or incomplete</p>	<p>Evidence shows that the student has generally attained the objective</p>	<p>Evidence demonstrates that the student has mastered this objective at a high level</p>
<p>Student work does not demonstrate a basic understanding of how to communicate ideas effectively in the following specific areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of problems at the sentence level (syntax, usage, grammar) • Clear and descriptive language • Writing flows well from paragraph to paragraph 	<p>Work shows evidence that the student understands how to communicate ideas effectively but the execution is weak or incomplete in the following specific areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of problems at the sentence level (syntax, usage, grammar) • Clear and descriptive language • Writing flows well from paragraph to paragraph 	<p>Work shows evidence that the student understands how to communicate ideas effectively in the following specific areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of problems at the sentence level (syntax, usage, grammar) • Clear and descriptive language • Writing flows well from paragraph to paragraph 	<p>Work shows evidence that the student understands how to communicate ideas effectively and does so at a highly proficient level, as defined by these specific areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of problems at the sentence level (syntax, usage, grammar) • Clear and descriptive and vivid language (sophisticated word choice) • Writing flows well from idea to idea via particularly artful transitions

PART 2 of 2: INDIRECT MEASURES (Student Interviews)

Since 2015, the faculty meets with students each year to ask them questions about their experience in the Literature Emphasis. The questions vary according to the issues at the time. Representative questions include:

1. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the emphasis? (This question is discussed by students without faculty present in the room. Then, after about 20 minutes, faculty come back in the room, and the students share their collective opinions with faculty for the next half hour.)
2. What are your professional plans after graduation? Do you feel that the Literature Emphasis prepared you for that path? Why or why not?
3. Did you encounter unwanted duplications of particular authors/texts from course to course? If so, which ones? What authors/texts did you NOT have a chance to study, that you wish you had?
4. When in your college career did you take ENGL 2600 (Intro to Literary Analysis)? If early, were its lessons helpful in later courses? If later, did you feel disadvantaged?
5. Did you develop individual working relationships with Literature professors? Did you feel that your teachers were available for meetings outside of class?
6. Did you feel that each level of the curriculum built upon the previous level, becoming more demanding of your thinking and writing skills? Did you feel that the grading standard was consistent across each level, from course to course?