

Central Washington University
Assessment of Student Learning
Department and Program Report

Academic Year of Report: 2012
College: Arts and Humanities
Department: English
Program: B. A. English

1. What student learning outcomes were addressed?

Outcome 5: *Students will demonstrate their writing competence by successfully meeting the rhetorical needs of situations requiring the application of a variety of genres and styles.*

This outcome is related to CWU Goal 1, which is to “maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus.” It is related to two CAH goals: “Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field” and “Develop students' intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning.” It is related to Department Goal 8, which is to offer “programs of study which incorporate a broad range of perspectives and thus prepare students to live and work creatively and compassionately in a global society” and Department Goal 9, which is to “provide learning opportunities in literary, linguistic, visual, and creative awareness requiring students to engage responsibly with and compose a wide range of texts while developing their repertoire of skills in interpreting, analyzing, writing, and evaluating texts and non-print media.”

Outcome 7. *Students will acquire lifelong learning skills, a wide-ranging appreciation for literature, and the disposition to read and write critically.*

This outcome is related to CWU Goal 1, which is to “maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus.” It is related to the CAH goal to “Develop students' intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning.” It is related to Department Goal 8, which is to offer “programs of study which incorporate a broad range of perspectives and thus prepare students to live and work creatively and compassionately in a global society.”

Outcome 8. *Students will demonstrate a functional knowledge of grammar and linguistics.* This outcome is related to CWU Goal 1, which is to “maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus.” It is related to two CAH goals: “Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field” and “Develop students' intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning.” It is related to Department Goal 8, which is to offer “programs of study which incorporate a broad range of perspectives and thus prepare students to live and work creatively and compassionately in a global society” and Department Goal 9, which is to “provide learning opportunities in literary, linguistic, visual, and creative awareness requiring students to engage responsibly with and compose a wide range of texts while developing their repertoire of skills in interpreting, analyzing, writing, and evaluating texts and non-print media.”

This goal was included because previous assessments have indicated that students have not mastered editing skills at the level we would expect and because our criterion for achievement was not met the last time it was assessed.

2. How were they assessed?

Outcome 5. The outcome that “students will demonstrate their writing competence by successfully meeting the rhetorical needs of situations requiring the application of a variety of genres and styles” was assessed using a direct measure and an indirect measure. The direct measure was our Senior Portfolio, which consists of three course papers or creative works chosen by students that are revised extensively during the senior colloquium. At least one of the papers must be a literary analysis that develops an argument. Student portfolios were assessed using a rubric that evaluates eight criteria on a scale of 1 to 6. A 4 on this scale meets expectations. Our criterion of achievement is that 90% of portfolios will score at least "Meets Expectations" for specific writing competencies including development of ideas, style, and mastery of conventions. In addition, our Senior Survey asks students to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether they had sufficient opportunity to meet this outcome during the program. Our criterion for achievement was a minimum average of 4.0.

Outcome 7. *Students will acquire lifelong learning skills, a wide-ranging appreciation for literature, and the disposition to read and write critically.*

All of our undergraduate English majors complete a Senior Survey in our capstone course, ENG 489. Four questions address this outcome.

Outcome 8. The outcome that “students will demonstrate a functional knowledge of grammar and linguistics” was evaluated using two indirect assessments and two direct assessments. First, a Senior Survey was distributed to students in our capstone course, ENG 489 (Fall, Winter, and Spring). They were asked to evaluate three course outcomes relating to grammar and linguistics on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 indicating no opportunity to meet the outcome and 5 indicating sufficient opportunity. Our criterion of achievement was to have an average of at least 4.0 on this five-point scale. Second, each student took an editing test in the Senior Colloquium. Our criterion of achievement was that 80% of students would score at least 80% on an editing diagnostic. Since some changes were made in the diagnostic, only the numbers for Spring Quarter were used for assessment (Spring enrollments were also substantially higher than for Fall and Winter Quarters). Third, Senior Portfolios are assessed for grammar and mastery of conventions along with other criteria. Our criterion of achievement is that 90% of all portfolios will meet expectations, which means having no more than two or three minor errors. Finally, the Department Chair conducted an interview with each of the ENG 489 sections (Fall, Winter, Spring) in order to obtain qualitative information about student satisfaction with the program.

3. What was learned?

Outcome 5. *Students will demonstrate their writing competence by successfully meeting the rhetorical needs of situations requiring the application of a variety of genres and styles.*

Portfolio: Out of 46 students submitting portfolios during 2012, 43 (93%) passed the course on their first attempt; two of the three who did not pass on the first try passed the following quarter, leading to a total of 45 (98%) who met expectations. The instructors for the course noted that some students, particularly those in our Writing Specialization, have had difficulty finding an appropriate example of a literary analysis.

Conclusion: Criterion met. Our criterion for achievement is that 90% of all portfolios will meet expectations for all criteria.

Outcome 7. *Students will acquire lifelong learning skills, a wide-ranging appreciation for literature, and the disposition to read and write critically.*

<i>Thinking back about your attitudes before entering the program, are you currently more likely to:</i>	Less likely	About the same	More likely	Much more likely
16. Read critically, recognizing the impact of ideology, culture, ethnicity, and gender in the production and reception of texts?	0	6/25 24%	7/25 28%	12/25 48%
17. Appreciate the formal and stylistic achievements of authors from multiple traditions around the world and from multiple periods in time?	0	2/25 8%	9/25 36%	14/25 56%
18. Continue learning and reading widely after you finish your degree?	0	7/25 28%	4/25 16%	14/25 56%
<i>Thinking again about your attitudes before entering the program, are you now likely to spend more time:</i>	Less time	About the same	More time	Much more time
19. Revising, editing, and proofreading your own writing for clarity, style, and correctness?	0	2/25 8%	7/25 28%	16/25 64%

For questions 16 and 19, 92% of students indicated they were either more likely or much more likely to continue to appreciate literary achievements in multiple cultures and to write carefully as a result of the program. Fewer students indicated that they would continue to read critically (76%) or that they would be more likely to read and learn widely after completing the program, though none indicated they were less likely.

The numbers for question 17 is substantially improved over 2011 (92% vs. 78%), which may reflect a greater emphasis on revision in the curriculum, but dropped for question 16 (76% vs. 100%). It is difficult to attribute that drop to any particular change in the program; it may simply represent a regression to the mean.

Outcome 8. *Students will demonstrate a functional knowledge of grammar and linguistics.*

Assessment 1: Senior Survey Students were asked to rate their opportunity to master specific outcomes concerning knowledge of grammar on a scale of 1 (insufficient opportunity) to 5 (sufficient opportunity). The numbers below represent averages for 25 students responding from Spring, Summer, and Fall Senior Colloquium classes. Our criterion for achievement was 4 or above for each outcome.

1. Use your knowledge of grammar to revise and edit your own writing and to comment on the writing of others.	4.84
2. Describe the part of speech and function of every word in a complex or compound sentence.	4.00

The numbers are somewhat higher than the last time they were measured (2010): 4.84 vs. 4.46 for the first outcome and 4.00 vs. 3.92 for the second outcome. For the current assessment, both numbers meet our criterion for success. Since the last assessment, we have increased ENG 320, English Grammar, from a 4-credit course to a 5-credit course, which may account for the difference. Since the change occurred in the middle of their programs, roughly half may have taken the five-credit version.

Assessment 2: Senior Colloquium Portfolio

Forty-six students took our Senior Colloquium in calendar year 2012. Each student is expected to revise three course papers or creative works, which are scored on a six-point scale using rubrics. Students must score at least a 4 for each criterion to pass. For grammar, our expectation is that the portfolio will have no more than two or three minor errors, and our criterion for achievement is that 90% of students will meet expectations. The course is graded S/U. Out of 46 students, 43 (93%) passed the course on their first attempt; two of the three who did not pass on the first try passed the following quarter, leading to a total of 45 (98%) who passed. Further, none of the three failed to pass because of grammar errors. They did not pass because they did not complete required work. Our criterion was met, and the final portfolio review did not suggest specific problems with grammar.

Assessment 3: Senior Colloquium Editing Test

Students in our Senior Colloquium are given an editing test consisting of sentences from student papers that they are asked to edit for correctness. They are also asked to identify the error in the sentence (sentences with a single error are chosen). Our criterion for achievement is that 80% of students will score at least 80% on these tests. None of the five sections of 489 offered during the 2012 calendar year met this criterion. The lowest section pass rate was 14% ; the highest was 60%.

Winter 2012	2/14	14%
Spring 2012 (two sections)	5/15	33%
Summer 2012	(Not available)	
Fall 2012	6/10	60%
Total	13/39	33%

Clearly we have not met the criterion, and these scores are on a par with previous years. The highest score was from Fall 2012, and these students are more likely to have taken the five-credit version of ENG 320. Numbers from 2013 will help to determine whether this is a trend.

There is some concern that the test scores may not be an accurate reflection of students’ grammar knowledge. The portfolio assessment, along with the students’ self-report in the Senior Survey, suggests that their knowledge may be greater than the test indicates. In at least one case, a student who received an A in ENG 320 scored only 62% on the editing test.

Assessment 4: Chair interview with Senior Colloquium students.

The chair met with four sections of 489 students; a total of 33 students participated. An effort was made to conduct an email discussion with a fifth, online section, but this was not wholly satisfactory. As in past years, some students would like to have seen more grammar instruction in their program. Some would

like to see grammar instruction integrated into more courses. Others would like to see a second course (in addition to ENG 320) offered. Students enter the program with very different levels of knowledge about grammar, and some felt unprepared to take ENG 320. At least one student took 320 a second time despite having received a passing grade the first time. Students in the current sections as well as past sections remarked that they felt “rusty” since they typically take ENG 320 early in their program and have relatively little grammar instruction between ENG 320 and ENG 489. Instructors usually mark and comment on grammar errors when they grade course papers, but little or no class time is devoted to grammar instruction in most classes.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information (feedback/program improvement)?

This assessment report will be distributed to department faculty and discussed at a department meeting during Winter quarter. If an action plan is needed, it will be assigned to the appropriate committee. Department actions taken this year or planned for next year are described below.

Outcome 5. *Students will demonstrate their writing competence by successfully meeting the rhetorical needs of situations requiring the application of a variety of genres and styles.*

We are currently in the process of making our Writing Specialization a separate major, so the specific writing outcomes for the new major and the English Language and Literature major will diverge. We will continue to ask Writing majors to develop analytical writing skills, but may need to find a way to ensure that they will have sufficient opportunity to write analytical papers. We may also have to change the assessment since our current Senior Colloquium does not provide a good way of measuring their success in a variety of genres and styles. The English Language and Literature outcome will likely be more focused on analytical writing, and would require only minimal changes to the assessment process.

Outcome 7. *Students will acquire lifelong learning skills, a wide-ranging appreciation for literature, and the disposition to read and write critically.*

This year’s results may suggest a greater emphasis on the value of reading critically.

Outcome 8.

We will continue tracking editing scores to see whether the improved scores for Fall 2012 represent a trend. Last year, we attempted to create an ENG 220 course on grammar for students who feel underprepared for ENG 320, but it was rejected by the curriculum committee as remedial-level rather than college-level. We believe that the committee may overestimate the grammar knowledge of incoming students, and we will submit a revised course proposal indicating why it is a college-level course.

5. What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment information?

As noted above, we attempted to create a new 200-level grammar course for students who do not feel ready for ENG 320. Since we are in the second year of a substantially-revised curriculum and are only beginning to see data from the new program, we have not made substantial changes.