Central Washington University  
Assessment of Student Learning  
Department and Program Report  

Academic Year of Report: 2009-2010  
College: Arts and Humanities  
Department: English  
Program: M.A. English Literature  

I. What student learning outcomes were addressed?

**Outcome 12. Students will read and interpret American, British, and World literatures in English.** This goal 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 10: “Our graduate programs will provide opportunities for students to extend and enrich their exploration of the disciplines of literature and language, specifically to strengthen their preparation for doctoral study, for careers in teaching writing and literature, and for teaching English to speakers of other languages.”

We chose this outcome because it is central to our program. We are looking specifically at the exam option because it is relatively new in its present form. Also, students appear to have been less successful in the exam option. Students choosing the exam options have won Distinguished Thesis awards in three of the last five years, and students choosing creative projects have won awards or published parts of their work.

**Outcome 15. Students will demonstrate their commitment to professional development.** This goal 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 10: “Our graduate programs will provide opportunities for students to extend and enrich their exploration of the disciplines of literature and language, specifically to strengthen their preparation for doctoral study, for careers in teaching writing and literature, and for teaching English to speakers of other languages.”

II. How were they assessed?

Outcome 12. *Students will read and interpret American, British, and World literatures in English.* This outcome is addressed at the course level in that all students are required to pass a minimum of one course each in American, British, and World literatures. Active students were assessed in Fall, Winter, and Spring.

*Direct Assessment:* This year, we looked at one specific form of assessment, the exam option, which also provided some indirect data concerning our thesis option. Committees used a rubric to evaluate exams for three things: understanding of materials, synthesis of texts and contexts, and clarity and focus of writing. The first two are specifically relevant to Outcome 12. Although
the exams are graded Pass with Honors/Pass/No Pass, we added a “low pass” option for our own internal use in order to identify areas for improvement at the program level. Since students are given the opportunity to rewrite one or two questions, we also tracked the number of retakes. Finally, since a significant number of students have changed from a thesis option to an exam option, we have tracked those changes.

Indirect Assessment: Students are given a graduate survey at the end of their program. They are asked to rank, on a scale of 1 to 5, whether or not they had sufficient opportunity to meet the outcome. Our criterion of achievement was a minimum score of 4.0 for each criterion. Because very few students have completed the surveys, we looked at data from a 2-year period.

Outcome 15. Students will demonstrate their commitment to professional development. We assessed this outcome by measuring student participation in professional development activities such as SOURCE, academic conferences, publications, and awards. Active graduate students for 2009/2010 were assessed in Fall, Winter, and Spring. Our criterion for achievement is that a minimum of 15% of active students will present, publish, or receive awards.

III. What was learned?

Outcome 12. Students will read and interpret American, British, and World literatures in English.

Exam: The number of exams was quite small, but of 3 students scored, the results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Honors</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>Pass w/ Reservations</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Material</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to draw connections between texts and their contexts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and focus of writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three were asked to rewrite at least one question primarily to strengthen connections between texts and contexts. Faculty were also asked to suggest program changes based on the results. In all three cases, it was suggested that students need more opportunities to synthesize their readings and that the exam procedure should be changed to allow students more time to develop their ideas.

Two of the three students changed to the exam option after completing substantial work toward a thesis.

Conclusion: Students appear to have a good understanding of individual texts, but need more preparation in synthesizing texts. Since all students whose exams have been scored with this rubric have rewritten at least one answer, changes to the exam procedure seem indicated.
Survey: Again, the number of returned surveys was small, but the number for Outcome 12 was slightly below the threshold at 3.66. Individual comments from students indicated a desire for more opportunities to apply the theories studied in their theory classes to their literature classes.

Conclusion: Assignments and course topics in our graduate courses should give students more opportunity to achieve the kind of synthesis measured in their exams. We also need to make that kind of synthesis an explicit program outcome. We should also change exam procedures to allow students

Outcome 15. Students will demonstrate their commitment to professional development.

Out of an active population of 22, 8 students presented papers or received awards during the 2009/10 academic year. Since some students had multiple achievements, this represents a total of 13 activities. Our criterion of achievement is that 15% of active students will present, publish, or receive awards, and this clearly exceeds that.

The breakdown is as follows:

SOURCE: Eight students presented papers or creative works.
Conference Papers: Three students presented at extra-local conferences.
Awards: Two students received College of Arts and Humanities Graduate Student Achievement Awards for 2009-10.

Conclusion: Students have substantially exceeded our expectations each year we have assessed this outcome. We should raise the criterion for achievement.

IV. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

This assessment report will be presented to the department at the first department meeting of 2010-11, and ongoing results have already been used to make one curricular change. It will also be distributed to the CAH Dean and to the Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies. The department graduate committee will be tasked with addressing any concerns, and their recommendations will be presented to the department for a vote.

Outcome 12. Students will read and interpret American, British, and World literatures in English.

We have either implemented or will discuss the following:

- We are discussing changing the exam procedure so that students write on one question during each of three sessions. This change is intended to help them write with more clarity and focus.
- We are changing the outcomes for some of the required courses in order to focus more on synthesizing readings and applying theory to literary texts.
- We have established a minimum GPA for students choosing the thesis option so that fewer students will start and then abandon a thesis project.
- We will revise the M.A. Literature outcomes.
Outcome 15. *Students will demonstrate their commitment to professional development.* We will continue to encourage students to present, publish, and apply for awards. Since student activities have exceeded the criterion for achievement both years we have measured this outcome, and exceeded it substantially this year, we may need to raise the bar.

V. *How did the department or program make use of the feedback from last year’s assessment?*

Since last year’s assessment of Outcome 12 was based on very limited data, we did not make further changes. Last year’s assessment of Outcome 15 did not indicate a need for change.