

**Texas A&M International University  
Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (AIER)  
of Academic Programs**

**Program: M.A. in English**

**Assessment Period Covered: March 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009**

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**The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review for Academic Programs is directed at Goal 1: Academics of the Texas A&M International University 2006-2010 Strategic Plan:**

Develop, maintain, assess, and improve academic programs, administrative/educational support services and student services, to admit, retain, and graduate students who achieve established learning outcomes designed to prepare them for success in their chosen careers.

**Institutional Mission**

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

**Academic Program Mission**

**Department of Language & Literature:** In unison with the institutional mission, this Department is dedicated to the promotion of intellectual and personal growth in students, with an emphasis on endowing them with flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing social, professional, economic, cultural, and political environments ushered in by this era of rapid technological change, information proliferation, and global interdependence. To achieve these aims, the Department is committed to the retention of a productive, professionally diverse and highly competent faculty involved in a wide range of academic endeavors.

### **Provide summary of the last cycle's use of results and changes implemented**

Last year we were able to assess only one of the three program outcomes because we had no one who had graduated during the year. For the third program outcome – achieving a graduation rate of 80% for program participants over a 5 year period – we were able to collect data, which follows:

Four years ago, in the fall semester of 2003, 3 students joined the M.A. in English program. Since then, 2 have graduated (66.6%) and 1 (33.3%) switched to the EDCI program.

During that fall semester of 2003, 13 total students were active in the M.A. in English program. Four years later, 7 (54%) have graduated with the degree, 3 (24%) switched majors to join the EDCI program, 1 (8%) entered a Ph.D. in English program (at Texas A&M), 1 (8%) became inactive, and 1 (8%) remains active.

Based on this data, we concluded as follows:

Because only 54% (56% in last year's AIRE) of the students enrolled in the program four years ago completed the program with a M.A. in English, we failed technically to meet our goal of an 80% graduation rate in the program. However, our stated goal defines program success in an excessively narrow way if one considers that only 1 of the 13 students active in the program 5 years ago dropped out of graduate school. That's a 93% success rate, if success is defined as persisting in the pursuit of one's educational goals.

Last year we indicated that the 80% graduation rate was unrealistic, but we kept it as a goal for 2007. For next year, we should lower the number to a more realistic goal of 60% while perhaps restating it in such a way that continuation in graduate school becomes a program goal, whether in the M.A. in English program or in the C&I program.

Based on this year's assessment of outcomes – as with last year's, we will strive to improve the program by update the tracking study and contact each semester students who have begun the graduate program in English and fail to enroll in a graduate English course during a fall or spring semester – an early sign that they may fail to complete the program. Responsibility for updating the tracking study and for contacting students will reside with the English graduate advisor. We followed this plan in 2007 and will continue it throughout 2008.

We have followed through with the recommendations above by monitoring enrollment and contacting students who have failed to enroll. So far we have found that the reasons for interruptions in progress have nothing to do with the program but everything to do with the personal and professional lives of our students.

**Selected list of program-level intended student learning outcomes** *It is recommended that programs rotate through their entire set of outcomes over a multi-year period. Programs may focus on one or two outcomes each year, as deemed appropriate.*

1. Graduates will demonstrate their knowledge of literary theory and criticism across genres.
2. Graduates will employ a range of literary tools to identify, analyze, and synthesize literary genres.
3. Graduates of the composition-rhetoric track of the degree will demonstrate an ability to identify, analyze, and respond to diverse rhetorical situations; graduates will also demonstrate knowledge of rhetorical theories and composition pedagogy.

Section I: Planning and Implementation
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**Outcome(s):** *Identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year.*

Graduates will employ a range of literary tools to identify, analyze, and synthesize literary genres.

**Please indicate if the outcome(s) is(are) related to writing (Write-On TAMIU!).**

Yes. Though our graduate students are expected to be able “to identify, analyze, and synthesize literary genres” orally, they are most often asked to do this in papers.

**Methods of assessment to be used:** *The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

We will use two methods of assessment:

1. Graduates will take a national exam in the field (MFAT in literature).
2. Graduates will provide a portfolio of papers that they have written in graduate literature classes, and these papers will be evaluated using a departmentally developed rubric to determine if they have achieved mastery of the learning outcome.

**Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:**

The exam will be given in November 2008, and the portfolios will be evaluated for the end of the semester.

**Criteria/Benchmark(s):** *Specify, if deemed appropriate to assess outcome(s). Criteria/benchmark(s) may be optional, especially if qualitative measures are used for data collection.*

For the exam, students would be expected to score at or above the 60 %ile nationally.

For the portfolio, students would be expected to be evaluated as having demonstrated competency in their mastery of the learning outcome.

## Section II: Analysis of Results

**What were the results attained?** *Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) of the program suggested by the results.*

Only two graduate students took the MFAT exam, a sample that cannot be deemed scientific. That said, the results are positive, as one student scored 78% (156 of a possible 200), and the other scored 90.5% (181 of a possible 200). Sub-scores were 10 points lower for both students in Literature 1901 and Later (50 and 75) than for Literature 1900 and Earlier (60 and 85). One student's sub-score for Literary Analysis were a relatively low 55, while the other student scored 83. Finally, in Literary History and Identification, the students scored 58 and 71 respectively.

Portfolios from two students nearing graduation were examined by 4 English faculty members. One student submitted 3 papers, and the other submitted 2, for a total of 5 papers. The faculty members rated the papers together through discussion, using the following rubric:

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Above Expectation
- 3 = Acceptable (Competent)
- 2 = Below Expectation
- 1 = Unacceptable

Of the five papers evaluated for "Outcome 2," four received a score of 4 and one received a score of 2.

**What were the conclusions reached?** *Should include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information to other individuals. For example, if the discussion took place during the annual spring retreat, include a summary from those deliberations using the Meeting Minutes template found at <http://www.tamtu.edu/integrate/docs/Minutes-Template.doc>. Once completed, submit the minutes to [assessment@tamtu.edu](mailto:assessment@tamtu.edu).*

While neither method of assessment utilized enough data to provide significant conclusions, the relative weakness in literature after 1901 revealed by the MFAT is not unexpected. Our faculty is in transition, as we are now seeking faculty to fill this void in American literature, and our recently hired British expert in more recent literature is just beginning to make his presence felt on the graduate level. The student who scored lower on the exam had not earned his BA in

English, which may account for his lower scores, but the fact that his 78% is well over the goal of 60% bodes well. We are very pleased with the other student's 90.5%.

The assessment of the paper portfolios also yielded good results. Both students demonstrated good thought processes and good knowledge of the skills needed to perform the assigned tasks. The one paper that was deemed "Below Expectation" is a Technical Writing exercise in which the student did not show a good understanding of the task. But, that student's other papers show that, when on familiar ground, he knows what to do and can do it well.

The entire English faculty received a copy of this report on March 27, 2009.

**Describe the action plan formulated. (The plan may be multi-year in nature.)**

*Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning, including a timeline for implementation.*

As noted above, the assessment sample used in both methods is too small to produce significant conclusions. That said, the results are in line with our expectations, and we anticipate that a reinforced faculty with added expertise in known areas of departmental weakness will improve things for the future. Thus, the action plan will be to continue our method of assessment and to monitor results for indications of note.

### Section III: Resources

**Resource(s) to implement action plan:** *Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.*

**Funding**

- New Resources Required
- Reallocation of current funds
- Current funding resources are sufficient.

**Physical**

- New or reallocated space

**Other**

- Primarily faculty/staff time
- University/rule procedure change only

**Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)**

**Identify proposed outcomes for the next assessment cycle:**

*Continuation of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for continuation):*

While we have not had enough data to draw firm conclusions, the outcomes in place seem sufficient and will continue to be monitored. As graduation rates were examined in the last assessment cycle, the next one should address Outcome 1: “Graduates will demonstrate their knowledge of literary theory and criticism.

*New Outcome(s) – (List outcomes below):*

*Modification of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for modification):*