

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MADISON

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE & FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Department of Comparative Literature and Folklore Studies
Assessment Plan update
May 10, 2013

Assessment of undergraduate majors

A unified assessment of undergraduate majors rests primarily on progress-toward-degree (PtD) tabulations maintained by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, as well as individual instructors' assessment of student performance within courses. Each student's progress is tracked on a separate assessment sheet. Structural or pedagogical barriers to progress toward the degree can be recognized by comparison of individual student tally sheets. Particular attention is directed toward the grades and performance of students in the three required foreign literature courses taken outside of the department as a means of ensuring adequate progress toward the literary proficiency in a language other than English identified as a goal of the major. An assessment of critical thinking, reading and writing skills is the goal of the two required (writing intensive) courses in literary criticism and theory (CL 310, 371 and/or 475). The capstone seminar (690) is required of all majors, and allows for further assessment across the board by staff and faculty as well as an opportunity for students to reflect on the learning that has occurred over the course of their studies in the undergraduate major. Honors students are required to complete a senior honors thesis, and a senior thesis is optional for all other students. Copies of honors projects are archived by the department.

At regularly occurring (biennial) curricular retreats, we plan to appraise tally sheets, thesis projects, and online exit surveys (see below) to appraise the effectiveness of the curriculum in attaining the goals set forth in the department's vision statement.

Assessment of certificate students (undergraduate and graduate)

As with majors, certificate students' progress is tracked by an individual assessment sheet. Certificate students are also asked to submit two final papers or projects of their choice as part of a student portfolio. Papers may be submitted at any point prior to receipt of the degree. Several of the key courses in the Folklore curriculum involve students in the production of ethnographic products which are then archived in either hard copy or digital form.

At regularly occurring (biennial) curricular retreats, student tally sheets, portfolio items, and archived projects are reviewed by staff and faculty to appraise our effectiveness in attaining the goals of our vision statement. We are planning an online exit survey of graduates as well (see below).

Assessment of graduate students

The department's Graduate Program Committee, led by the Director of Graduate Studies, reviews the progress of students after the conclusion of each academic year. An assessment (PtD) sheet permits concrete notations of each student's progress. Students' proficiency in a second language is assessed through a language examination administered in April of the first year of graduate study. Knowledge of foundational literature and theory is assessed through a further examination taken during the student's second year of study (generally in April). The M.A. is awarded on successful completion of this examination. For students continuing for the doctorate, a Ph.D. preliminary examination is required that consists of three written essays. One of these essays must focus on comparative criticism and theory; the other two essays focus on topics arrived at through consultation of the student with the student's advisor and committee. These essays become the basis of a subsequent oral examination conducted by the student's entire committee along with additional departmental members. Within six weeks of successful completion of the Ph.D. preliminary exam and oral, the student meets again with the advisor and committee to present an initial draft of a dissertation proposal. For doctoral students, the culmination of studies consists of the completion and successful defense of a doctoral dissertation.

Exit surveys

We are in the process of composing and instituting exit surveys for all our undergraduate and graduate majors as well as for our certificate students. A customized exit survey will be sent to all graduating students in each category in the fall and spring of each year. Students who complete the survey will become eligible for a prize drawing awarded at the end of the spring semester. A follow-up survey will be sent to all alumni five years after completion of the degree. These exit surveys will allow students to register their views regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, both as perceived when completing the degree and in hindsight after the passage of several years.