

Department of English
ASSESSMENT REPORT

Last year the Department of English devised an assessment plan for its literature majors. This assessment was implemented in semester 1, 1997. Materials (papers and, in some cases, exams, and "reflections on the major") were gathered from some 250 English majors enrolled in literature courses. Portfolios of 95 randomly selected students in these 19 upper division literature courses were read against the department's GOALS as described in the Assessment plan. This Fall, an assessment plan was developed for the major with a Creative Writing emphasis. Assessment of 49 students enrolled in that major is taking place this term. The creative writing portion depends on end-of-semester evaluations that are not available for this summary.

RESULTS

The scores immediately below are the totals awarded for the four criteria listed as the Knowledge Goals, that is, "knowledge of works of literature in English," "awareness of general outlines of literary history," "awareness of social and historical context," and "knowledge of important literary forms and techniques," gathered from reading the exams:

High	Medium	Low	No basis
46	45	15	118

The scores immediately below are the totals awarded for the two criteria listed as the Skills Goals, that is, "ability to analyze literary texts," and "ability to interpret texts in written form (including awareness of audience, spelling and punctuation, MLA conventions, paragraph development, coherence, syntactic and lexical maturity)," gathered from reading the papers:

High	Medium	Low	No basis
97	92	37	5

Students were also asked for "Reflections on the Major," a short out-of-class essay keyed to the Goals. The vast majority reported satisfaction with the curriculum and confidence in their writing ability.

COMMENT

- We are satisfied with the over-all conclusion to be drawn from these numbers: the large majority of our seniors are competent or better in the criteria the department established as the Goals for our major in literature in English. We have commented to each other that we were surprised to find such a high degree of competence; our surprise perhaps reflects the fact that in classes we usually grade papers from a broad range of students, not just our senior majors.

- The Assessment Committee found the exams less useful than the papers, and knowledge less evident than skill. The Departmental Committee will discuss findings in the fall to consider whether adjustments in the undergraduate literature major and /or the assessment procedures are indicated.

REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR IN LITERATURE

Assessment Tools Used

Student portfolios _____X_____

Exit evaluations _____X_____ "Reflections on the Major"