



ASSESSMENT REPORT REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING

MFA in Writing

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019 - 2020

REPORT DUE DATE: December 4, 2020

This is an alternative template.

Given the unusual circumstances of the 2019-2020 academic year, each program/department/major/minor/certificate has two options of assessment:

(a) Usual assessment report based on attached template OR

(b) Alternative assessment reflections on distance learning pivot based on this template

Every program/department/major/minor/certificate can choose ONE of the two report formats to submit

Please make sure to fill out Page 1 – Questions 1 and 2

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- Who should submit the report? – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), graduate and non-degree granting certificate programs of the College of Arts and Sciences.
 - Programs can combine assessment reports for a major and a minor program into one aggregate report as long as the mission statements, program learning outcome(s) evaluated, methodology applied to each, and the results are clearly delineated in separate sections. If you choose to submit a remote learning reflections document, it should also have separate segments for major and minor
 - Undergraduate, Graduate and Certificate Programs must submit separate reports. An aggregate report is allowed only for major and minor of the same program
 - It is recommended that assessment report not exceed 10 pages. Additional materials (optional) can be added as appendices
 - Curriculum Map should be submitted along with Assessment Report

Some useful contacts:

1. Prof. Alexandra Amati, FDCD, Arts – adamati@usfca.edu
2. Prof. John Lendvay, FDCD, Sciences – lendvay@usfca.edu
3. Prof. Mark Meritt, FDCD, Humanities – meritt@usfca.edu
4. Prof. Michael Jonas, FDCD, Social Sciences – mrjonas@usfca.edu
5. Prof. Suparna Chakraborty, AD Academic Effectiveness – schakraborty2@usfca.edu

Academic Effectiveness Annual Assessment Resource Page:

<https://myusf.usfca.edu/arts-sciences/faculty-resources/academic-effectiveness/assessment>

Email to submit the report: assessment_cas@usfca.edu

Important: Please write the name of your program or department in the subject line.

For example: FineArts_Major (if you decide to submit a separate report for major and minor);

FineArts_Aggregate (when submitting an aggregate report)

I. LOGISTICS

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

It's Dave Madden, Academic Director, at dmadden@usfca.edu.

2. Please indicate if you are submitting report for (a) a Major, (b) a Minor, (c) an aggregate report for a Major and Minor (in which case, each should be explained in a separate paragraph as in this template), (d) a Graduate or (e) a Certificate Program.

Please also indicate which report format are you submitting –Standard Report or Reflections Document

This is the reflections document for a graduate program.

3. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map in 2019-2020 academic year? If there has been a change, please submit the new/revised Curricular Map document.

There have not.

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state “Yes” or **“No.”** Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program

Mission Statement (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

In its commitment to diversity, the MFA Program seeks to give writers from any background the skills, compassion, and sense of justice to engage in dialogue with the ever-changing world.

Mission Statement (Minor):

3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state “Yes” or **“No.”** Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are

submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

Note: Major revisions in the program learning outcomes need to go through the College Curriculum Committee (contact: Professor Joshua Gamson, gamson@usfca.edu). Minor editorial changes are not required to go through the College Curriculum Committee.

PLOs (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the fundamentals of literary composition and craft.

Students will be able to read as writers, applying a critical craft vocabulary as they analyze the ways in which literary meaning is developed in the works of published authors.

Using a critical craft vocabulary, students will be able to evaluate and analyze the techniques and intentions of developmental drafts, including their own, and to participate in constructive critical discussion of works in progress.

Students are prepared for participation in the public life of literature, which may include locating their own work in the context of contemporary professional practice, acquiring skills for writing-related professions, and participating in diverse literary communities.

PLOs (Minor):

III. REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING

1. What elements of the program were adaptable to a remote/distance learning environment?

- **Peer review of student manuscripts** in our workshop classes was easily adaptable to digital formats instead of paper.
- **Visiting writers** and publishing experts were often more possible to plan in our remote format, as people didn't need to leave their homes to engage with our students.
- The **seminar courses' format**, involving students reading and responding to published work, was unchanged (though see below about class discussion and learning).

2. What elements of the program were not adaptable to a remote/distance learning environment?

- With its inability to let two people talk at the same time, **Zoom is not conducive to the engaged group discussions that fuel most of our teaching and learning.** I know this seems counterintuitive—people can't easily interrupt one another—but part of our jobs as instructors is reading the level of group engagement in discussion, and Zoom creates a sterile environment more conducive to lecture-style teaching. This is especially true in our seminar courses of 12-15 people: more students check out for the whole class than with in-person seminars.
- Many instructors use classroom whiteboards to track group discussion and pull out key points to guide students toward learning—particularly useful for students who are more visual than auditory learners. **Zoom's whiteboard feature isn't capable of replicating this visual discussion tracking.** Students can't choose on their own to look at the whiteboard or each other; the class's view is dictated by the instructor, and it's always one or the other.
- Finally, **community doesn't really replicate remotely.** The majority of our applicants say they're looking to join a community of writers, and while we hosted (over Zoom) more events this term than any other in recent memory, students report that they still feel isolated from one another. This is true of us all, in many ways, during this pandemic, but that sense of community is something that can't adapt to remote learning.

3. What was the average proportion of synchronous versus asynchronous learning for your program or parts thereof? A rough estimate would suffice.

We've got 100% synchronous learning.

4. For what aspects of learning is synchronous instruction effective and for which ones is asynchronous instruction more effective?

I don't think asynchronous instruction works in an MFA in Writing program, given that every course we offer is centered on group discussion. People need to be present with one another to learn.

5. As remote/distance learning continues in the current environment, what changes has the program instituted based on experiences with remote instruction?

The full-time and part-time faculty have planned a retreat/tutorial/brain trust meeting for January, to share tips and tactics and strategies for teaching creative writing via Zoom. Our goal is to go into the spring term as fully prepared as we can, now that we know well enough in advance that our courses will be remote.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any relevant tables, charts and figures, if the program so chooses, could be included here)