

<NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT/MAJOR OR MINOR>

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21
REPORT DUE DATE: 11/01/2021

- Who should submit the report? – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), as well as 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.
- Undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs must submit separate reports
- It is recommended that each assessment report not exceed 10 pages. Additional materials (optional) can be added as appendices.
- A curricular map should be submitted along with each assessment report (we suggest that the curricular map should be informed by recent assessment outcomes).

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).

Bruce Snider, Chair

bhsnider@usfca.edu

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

(C) Submitting a Major and Minor aggregated report

3. Please note that a Curricular Map should accompany every assessment report. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map?

No.

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? 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 programs

- Mission Statement (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

No.

The mission of the Department of English:

The study of literature and writing has long stood at the center of humanistic education. In that tradition, the department of English educates students in the rich intellectual and creative values embodied in literary works. Because literature by its very nature expresses the complex intellectual, spiritual, moral, social and psychological life of human cultures, its study is integral to the Jesuit mission of valuing “learning as a humanizing, social activity.” Our inclusive curriculum fully supports “a diverse, socially responsible learning community of high quality scholarship and academic rigor sustained by a faith that does justice.

This mission statement was in place before our APR way back in 2008-09 and has not been revised, though we are planning to revise it along with our PLOs. This is the statement from the department website:

The Department of English at the University of San Francisco offers both major and minor programs with a literature or writing concentration. Central to these programs is the belief that the close study of literature offers great pleasure, intellectual challenge and versatile training for a variety of careers. Our professors help students develop a greater understanding of the power of language and thought, the rich diversity of literary traditions and the cultural contexts of literary production. Students will mature as readers, thinkers and writers, be able to engage in analysis and discussion and write with acuity and critical self-awareness.

- **Mission Statement (Minor):**

No.

Same as above.

2. **Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? 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: It is expected that PLOs will vary in level of mastery between different programs in the same discipline (e. g., a major and minor in the same subject area). 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):**

1. Students will demonstrate in writing and speech the ability to develop clear and coherent interpretive essays and original creative writing; they can articulate in writing and discussion/workshop their responses to literary and/or peer texts.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.
3. Students will learn to read texts from multiple perspectives: e.g. learn differentiated readings via various contemporary critical theories.

4. Students will identify characteristics of different literary genres: novel, short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
5. Students will identify differences between various historical periods and literary movements.

- **PLOs (Minor):**

Same as above.

3. **State the particular program learning outcome(s) you assessed for the academic year 2020-2021. What rubric did you use?**

The Role of Rubrics

The rubric is the single most important thing you need for assessment, and putting time and thinking into designing a good rubric is going to make the entire process a lot easier, faster, and meaningful. Your rubric should break down your chosen PLO into the smallest measurable components, so that the assessment of each piece of work becomes linear and easy, and the calibration among different faculty assessing more objective. If you still have to debate a while whether that one line of the rubric has been fulfilled or not, chances are your rubric item is still an aggregate and can be broken down further into smaller components. Once you have made a detailed rubric, then not only the “grading” work will be faster and straightforward, but at the end of it you will have data that is significantly more meaningful. For example, some parts of the PLO may be in tiptop shape while others may need to be massaged or tweaked, with more attention given to that particular item in class. Conversely, your data may show you that the PLO itself is not what you thought it should be—it may be that it duplicates something other PLOs include or that a crucial part of what you teach is getting lost in the cracks between your PLOs. So do make sure that the rubric is as detailed and thorough as you possibly can manage (a short rubric in fact makes the grading longer, as counterintuitive as that seems).

- **PLO(s) being assessed (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

PLO #5. Students will identify differences between various historical periods and literary movements.

- **PLO(s) being assessed (Minor):**

Same as above

III. METHODOLOGY

Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

For example, “the department used questions that were inputted in the final examination pertaining directly to the <said PLO>. An independent group of faculty (not teaching the course) then evaluated the responses to the questions and gave the students a score for responses to those questions.”

Important Note – WSCUC advises us to use “direct methods,” which consist of a direct evaluation of a student work product. “Indirect methods” like exit interviews or student surveys can be used only as additional complements to a direct method.

For any program with fewer than 10 students: If you currently have fewer than 10 students in your program (rendering your statistical analysis biased due to too few data points), it is fine to describe a multi-year data collection strategy here. It would be important to remember that every 3 years, we would expect you to have enough data to conduct a meaningful analysis.

Important: Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.

- **Methodology used (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

Two faculty volunteered to rate student work products—final papers from ENGL 320. We chose this course because it's a required course for students from both the literature and the creative writing tracks. The final paper seemed the most likely to demonstrate the outcome. After calibrating with two sample work products, the faculty volunteers rated ten total work products sampled from a class of 20 students. (Our random sampling was the student names listed at odd numbers on an alphabetical roster.) The faculty raters rated all work products at the same standard or adjacent standards for the whole sample; in the case of adjacent ratings, the higher rating was thrown out.

- **Methodology used (Minor):**

Same as above.

IV. RESULTS & FINDINGS

What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

This section asks you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:

- a. how well students mastered the outcome at the level they were intended to,**
- b. any trends noticed over the past few assessment cycles, and**
- c. the levels at which students mastered the outcome based on the rubric used.**

To address this question, among many other options, one option is to use a table showing the distribution, for example:

	age of Students
te Mastery of the outcome	
ed the outcome in most parts	
ed some parts of the outcome	
master the outcome at the level intended	

Results (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

The results:

(The number following the performance standard is the number of work products assigned that rating.)

Exceeds expectations: 0

Meets expectations: 4

Needs improvement: 4

Does not meet expectations: 2

Interpretation:

These results are close to what was expected. Over time, our department has grown less interested in the study of literary periodicity. We're amid a years-long revision of our literature track curriculum and literature course offerings that will eventually reflect this evolution.

(Because the creative writing students take about half of their required coursework in literature courses, any change to the literature curriculum has implications for both tracks.)

Unfortunately, our PLOs do not yet reflect these revisions; they've remained static for several years -- dating before our most recent APR. For those reasons, we assumed that scores would be relatively low for this outcome; if anything, the fact that nearly half of rated work products met expectations for an outcome that isn't our priority in student learning is a pleasant surprise.

V. CLOSING THE LOOP: ACTION PLAN BASED ON ASSESSMENT RESULTS

1. Based on your analysis in Section 4, what are the next steps that you are planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require any changes to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

- **Closing the Loop (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

As has been noted in previous assessment reports, The English Department is in the process of revising its PLOs to reflect the shared aims of our three concentrations more accurately— literature, creative writing, and comparative literature; and we do not expect this PLO to remain. We had hoped to have our PLOs updated by now, but the absorption of the Comparative Literature major as a concentration within English, then the sudden shift to remote teaching during COVID, and the more recent loss of English faculty has put us well behind our original aims. Our current plan is to finalize our revision of PLOs by the end of the next 2022-2023 academic year.

- **Closing the Loop (Minor):**

Same as above.

2. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2021-2022, submitted in October 2018)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in the more recent assessment discussed in this report?

- **Suggestions (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

We were, then, in the process of revising our PLOs, as well as our entire literature curriculum, and we are still working on this. We've had several departmental retreats to discuss the changes, and we are making progress, though, as noted earlier, we've been set back with the absorption of comparative literature, the effects of Covid and the shift remote teaching, and the loss of English faculty. We appreciate your understanding about how these factors can affect our assessment.

- **Suggestions (Minor):**

It was suggested that the English minor be considered a single program with two tracks, rather than as two distinct minors and that we submit the report to reflect this. Since that suggestion, we've also absorbed Comparative Lit as a track within the major, so any change in this direction would no doubt now involve a single minor with *three* tracks.

VI. BIG PICTURE

What have you learned about your program from successive rounds of assessment? Is a picture of the whole program starting to emerge? For example, what areas of strength have emerged? What opportunities of improvement have you identified?

- **Big Picture (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

What we learned last year has been further confirmed: we need to change our PLOs and we're getting there.

- **Big Picture (Minor):**

Same as above.

VII. Feedback to your Assessment Team

What suggestions do you have for your assessment team (the Faculty Directors of Curriculum Development and the Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness)? What can we do to improve the process?

As the former English Chair Susan Steinberg noted in a previous assessment report: “If a department is undergoing huge curricular changes, as we are, it needs time to make the changes. Assessment is not necessarily, at this particular point, helping us through the process; in my opinion, it’s only creating work that keeps the department from doing the work it needs to do based on last year’s (and the previous year’s) discussions. I recommend that departments be given the time they need to make curricular and PLO changes, within reason, and come back to this assessment process after the changes have been made....I don’t see how assessing the old PLOs is helpful.”

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

We created a new rubric for this assessment. This rubric used a four-tier structure for the performance standards. In previous assessments, when we have used only three tiers (exceeds, meets and does not meet expectations), the results have been unhelpful; adding the "needs improvement" performance standard allows us to differentiate students who are approaching the learning outcome from those who are not engaging with the outcome at all.

Rubric:

Exceeds expectations: recognizes differences between historical periods and/or literary movements with exceptional specificity and accuracy.

Meets expectations: recognizes differences between historical periods and/or literary movements with appropriate specificity and accuracy.

Needs improvement: recognizes differences between historical periods and/or literary movements with limited specificity and accuracy.

Below expectations: does not recognize differences between historical periods and/or literary movements or does so with excessive errors.