

# New Mexico State University

## Detailed Assessment Report 2015 - 2016 English Graduate

As of: 12/07/2016 10:12 AM MDT

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked *One-Time, Recurring, No Request*.)

### Mission / Purpose

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The Department of English's Mission in Teaching: In keeping with NMSU's land grant mission, the English Department promotes broad literacies within our student population and throughout the diverse cultures of our community. We help our students become strong writers and thoughtful readers. We encourage students to develop habits of mind that allow them to read a range of literary and other texts with critical understanding, to write a variety of creative, academic/scholarly, and practical texts, and to work in thoughtful ways with a commitment to the good of the community. We teach students to respect cultural diversity. We train teachers to understand and use current approaches to language, literature, and communication instruction. At the graduate level, we provide advanced education in the study of literature, film, digital media, rhetoric, cultural studies, the practice of creative writing, and the development of professional writing and communication abilities for many purposes.

### Goals/Objectives

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#### **G 1: Teach students to engage with field**

The program aims to teach graduating students to produce work that engages with and contributes to relevant scholarly/creative conversations, as appropriate to the project.

#### **G 2: Teach critical reading**

The program aims to teach students to read a range of literary, rhetorical, professional, and/or popular texts with critical understanding.

#### **G 3: Teach students to analyze cultural texts**

The program aims to teach students to analyze cultural texts with an aim to promote respect for the diversity within student populations and across cultures.

#### **G 4: Teach effective writing in varied genres**

The program aims to teach students to produce a variety of effective creative, academic, scholarly, and practical texts that demonstrate understanding of appropriate contexts, intelligence and reasoning, skill in handling the requirements of the given genre, and university-level competence in grammar and usage of written English.

### Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

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#### **S 1: Engagement with field**

Graduating students will demonstrate the ability to produce work that engages with and contributes to relevant scholarly/creative conversations, as evidenced by the capstone project (dissertation, thesis, master essay, or master portfolio).

#### **Strategic Plan Associations**

##### **Arts and Sciences College**

1 Arts and Sciences College Strategic Goals

1.1 Goal 1: Provide students with a high quality education in the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences, at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels.

1.2 Goal 2: Promote discovery through scholarship and creative activity, encourage innovation and dissemination, spark economic advancement, and inspire a culture of excellence.

##### **New Mexico State University**

1.1 Academics and Graduation: Provide stellar programs, instruction, and services to achieve timely graduation

1.1.3 (1C) Provide strong academic programs through continuous innovation and evaluation

1.3.3 (3C) Promote the important role of research and economic development in undergraduate and graduate education

#### **Related Measures**

##### **M 1: Ability to situate one's work in the field orally.**

Graduating students will demonstrate the ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field (for example, by demonstrating an awareness of relevant critical or creative movements). Faculty believe that this skill is not only an important outcome of our graduate programs but also a crucial qualification for student success on the job market and in the profession. This outcome complements the writing outcome studied in our last two cycles, the ability to demonstrate engagement with a larger critical or creative field in the written capstone project. How this direct learning outcome will be assessed: This learning outcome was assessed at students' MA, MFA, and PhD oral examinations. Faculty rated students' ability to talk about their research in ways that situate it in their field during this final examination. The outcome was assessed on a 4-point scale, where 1="Absent", 2="Emerging", 3="Proficient", and 4="Consistent excellent" performance in this area. Students were prepared for the exam by their chair and committee, with discussion of the traits being assessed. Upon completion of the final exam or defense, the members of each student's committee completed a Faculty Outcomes Assessment Questionnaire that includes the direct learning outcome. These questionnaires were program-specific, with the direct learning outcome the common trait assessed across programs. They were collected after the examination and given to a designated administrative assistant who handles graduate student matters. Once all student examinations for the academic year were held, the questionnaires were passed to the Director of Graduate Studies for analysis. Typically faculty questionnaires are passed to the Director of Graduate Studies in the final week of the spring term for compilation and summary in a report presented to faculty early in the following fall semester. To facilitate faculty assessment of this outcome and

last year's outcome (student engagement with the field), students were also asked to submit an updated resume showing the extent of their professional engagement with a larger scholarly/creative community.

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

#### Connected Documents

[2015-16 MA CW rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA Lit rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA RPC rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA Teachers rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MFA CW rubric](#)  
[2015-16 PhD RPC rubric](#)  
[OA Rubric: MA Questionnaire, emphasis in Creative Writing](#)  
[OA Rubric: MA Questionnaire, emphasis in English Studies for Teachers](#)  
[OA Rubric: MA Questionnaire, emphasis in Literature](#)  
[OA Rubric: MA Questionnaire, emphasis in RPC](#)  
[OA Rubric: MFA in Creative Writing Questionnaire](#)  
[OA Rubric: PhD Questionnaire](#)

#### Target:

Our target for this assessment is to have 80% or more of our graduating students demonstrate either proficient or consistent excellent performance in this area. These are indicated by ratings of either 3 or 4 on the faculty questionnaire.

#### Connected Documents

[2015-16 MA CW rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA Lit rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA RPC rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MA Teachers rubric](#)  
[2015-16 MFA CW rubric](#)  
[2015-16 PhD RPC rubric](#)

#### Finding (2015 - 2016) - Target: Met

English Graduate Programs: Findings for 2015-2016 Outcomes Assessment Faculty Questionnaires were completed for all students graduating in 2015-2016. Twenty-seven (27) students graduated: 5 with a PhD, 13 with an MFA (7 in Poetry, 6 in Fiction), and 9 with an MA (4 in Literature, 3 in CW-Fiction, and 2 in RPC). Seventy-eight (78) Faculty Questionnaires were collected after the final oral examination: 20 for the PhD, 31 for the MFA (15 in Fiction, 16 in Poetry), and 27 for the MA (12 in Literature, 9 in CW-Fiction, and 6 in RPC). Faculty committees generally consist of 3 members for the MA and MFA, and 4 members for the PhD. The Faculty Questionnaire asked committee members to assess student performance in several areas, including this year's shared direct learning outcome (DLO): Graduating students will demonstrate the ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field (for example, by demonstrating an awareness of relevant critical or creative movements). Each outcome was ranked on a scale of 1-4, where 1=Absent, 2=Emerging competence, 3=Proficient, and 4=Consistent excellent performance. The first table below summarizes scores for all programs on the DLO, based on the Faculty Questionnaires. The following tables report all scores assessed on the Faculty Questionnaires by program. The Direct Learning Outcome is highlighted in each table.

Summary Table: Student Ability to Situate Work in Field Orally Program Number assessed (n) Average Score Range 1-2 Scores 4 Scores PhD n=20; 20 forms, 5 students] 3.4 2-4 1 10 MFA-F n=15; 15 forms, 6 students 3.53 2-4 1 9 MFA-P n=15; 15 forms, 7 students 3.93 3-4 0 14 MA-Lit n=12; 12 forms, 4 students 3.58 2-4 1 8 MA-RPC n=6; 6 forms, 2 students 3.83 3-4 0 11 MA-CW n=3; 3 forms, 3 students 3.67 3-4 0 2 Faculty Outcomes Questionnaire, PhD RPC (defense) [n=20; 20 forms, 5 students] Average Score 2015 score 2014 score Range of Scores # of 1-2 Scores # of 4 Scores Ability to define a research question 3.7 3.69 3.31 3-4 0 15 Familiarity with current scholarly literature 3.7 3.75 3.63 3-4 0 15 Ability to develop methodology 3.50 3.50 3.31 2-4 1 11 Ability to develop and investigate a hypothesis 3.50 3.69 3.56 2-4 1 11 Ability to draw relevant conclusions 3.40 3.56 3.44 2-4 2 10 Facility in writing 3.45 3.69 3.63 2-4 1 10 Demonstrates ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field [DLO] 3.40 "engagement with ongoing scholarly/creative conversations" 3.81 3.50 2-4 2 10 Faculty Outcomes Questionnaire, MFA (Fiction) [n=15; 15 forms, 6 students] Average Score 2015 score 2014 score Range of Scores # of 1-2 Scores # of 4 Scores Growth as a writer 3.67 4 3.65 2-4 2 12 Growth as a reader in the field 3.6 3.83 3.55 2-4 1 10 Knowledge in field of work 3.67 3.75 3.60 3-4 0 10 Ability to discuss own work 3.87 3.92 3.75 3-4 0 13 Demonstrates ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field [DLO] 3.53 "engagement with ongoing scholarly/creative conversations" 3.92 3.60 2-4 1 9 Faculty Outcomes Questionnaire, MFA (Poetry) [n=16; 16 forms, 7 students] Average Score 2015 score 2014 score Range of Scores # of 1-2 Scores # of 4 Scores Ability to read and interpret primary texts 3.67 3.59 3.92 3-4 0 8 Ability to use theory 3.58 3.26 3.58 3-4 0 7 Knowledge of literary movements, periods, authors, texts [n=11] 3.64 3.48 3.75 2-4 1 5 Ability to locate and use research materials 3.42 3.44 3.17 2-4 2 7 Ability to develop and articulate written arguments 3.67 3.41 3.92 3-4 0 8 Ability to speak about work 3.75 3.41 3.83 2-4 1 10 Overall preparation for exam 3.67 3.63 3.83 2-4 1 8 Demonstrates ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field [DLO] 3.58 "engagement with ongoing scholarly/creative conversations" 3.48 3.75 2-4 1 8 Faculty Outcomes Questionnaire, MA-RPC [n=6; 6 forms, 2 students] Average Score 2015 score 2014 score Range of Scores # of 1-2 Scores # of 4 Scores Ability to frame work within scholarly conversations 3.83 3.82 3.72 3-4 0 5 Familiarity with current scholarly literature 3.83 3.91 3.72 3-4 0 5 Ability to construct/convey arguments 4 4 3.72 4 0 6 Ability to convey complex information 4 4 3.72 4 0 6 Ability to draw relevant conclusions 3.83 4 3.56 3-4 0 5 Facility in writing 3.83 4 3.72 3-4 0 5 Facility in presenting work visually 3.67 4 3.71 3-4 0 4 Demonstrates ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field [DLO] 3.83 "engagement with ongoing scholarly/creative conversations" 3.91 3.83 3-4 0 5 Faculty Outcomes Questionnaire, MA-CW [n=9; 9 forms, 3 students] Average Score 2015 score 2014 score Range of Scores # of 1-2 Scores # of 4 Scores Demonstrates ability to talk about their work in ways that situate it in their field [DLO] 3.67 "engagement with ongoing scholarly/creative conversations" 3.44 n/a 3-4 0 6 Conclusions What percentage of students obtained the desired level of performance? Ninety-six percent (96%) of faculty questionnaires completed (n=75 of 78) indicated that students reached the desired level of performance, "proficient" or "consistent excellent performance," in their engagement with ongoing scholarly or creative conversations. Of the remaining 3 questionnaires, both

indicated "emerging competence" in this area. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of questionnaires completed (n=54 of 78) indicated the optimal level of "consistent excellent performance." Does the percentage of students who obtained the desired level of performance meet the program's stated benchmark? Yes.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

**Collection of 2014-15 data**

*Established in Cycle:* 2014 - 2015

Questionnaires will be collected throughout the year and analyzed by the DGS during the summer or early fall. Results will ag...

**Action Plan for Improving Student Ability to Situate Work in Field Orally**

*Established in Cycle:* 2015 - 2016

While the target was met and exceeded, the faculty stressed the importance of students' ability to situate their work in the f...

**S 2: Critical reading**

Graduating students will demonstrate the ability to read a range of literary, rhetorical, professional, and/or popular texts with critical understanding.

**S 3: Skillful analysis of cultural texts**

Graduating students will demonstrate ability to analyze cultural texts with an aim to promote respect for the diversity within student populations and across cultures.

**S 4: Effective writing in varied genres**

Graduating students will be able to produce a variety of effective creative, academic, scholarly, and practical texts that demonstrate understanding of appropriate contexts, intelligence and reasoning, skill in handling the requirements of the given genre, and university-level competence in grammar and usage of written English.

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**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Collection of 2014-15 data**

Questionnaires will be collected throughout the year and analyzed by the DGS during the summer or early fall. Results will again be shared with graduate students via the inclusion of the president of EGSO on Graduate Studies when the report is vetted, distribution of the finalized report on the grad student listserv, and inclusion of our program goals and OA criteria on the website. Students will also be asked to complete an exit survey as an indirect measure of student learning. They will be sent the exit survey by their advisors, who will receive it from the DGS. These surveys will be anonymous and will be compiled by the Graduate Secretary.

**Established in Cycle:** 2014 - 2015

**Implementation Status:** Finished

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome):**

**Measure:** Ability to situate one's work in the field orally. | **Outcome:** Engagement with field

**Action Plan for Improving Student Ability to Situate Work in Field Orally**

While the target was met and exceeded, the faculty stressed the importance of students' ability to situate their work in the field orally, which is important both academically and professionally as students prepare to enter the job market or apply for additional graduate programs (PhD and MFA). In addition to mentoring our advisees in this skill, we plan to encourage attendance at conferences and foster department-level opportunities for students to discuss their work with peers and faculty. In particular, the faculty recommended the following to support student achievement in this area: Faculty continue to discuss with students the need to engage with larger scholarly and creative communities and how to refine this skill; faculty share with students preparing for the oral examination that this skill will be assessed and include it in their preparation of examinees. The department continue to support student participation in regional and national conferences. Last year, the department head and Graduate Studies Committee approved an unprecedented number (17) student applications for departmental Graduate Travel Awards totaling \$6,000. Up to \$6,000 will be set aside again this year to fund strong proposals. The department continue to sponsor the English Graduate Student Speaker Series (Pizza and a Presenter) we launched last year, and this year open it up to all students wishing to present their work, with priority given to students departing for or returning from conferences. The department consider sponsoring a Three Minute Thesis competition modeled on the successful event held in the College of Arts and Sciences in the past: see <http://artsci.nmsu.edu/en/forms/3-minute-thesis-application>. The area groups discuss this skill with students in their programs, perhaps as a component of an area-specific professionalization workshop.

**Established in Cycle:** 2015 - 2016

**Implementation Status:** Planned

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome):**

**Measure:** Ability to situate one's work in the field orally. | **Outcome:** Engagement with field

**Projected Completion Date:** 08/2017

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**Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers**

**1. Engagement: How did you engage faculty, administrators, staff, students and/or other stakeholders in discussing results of the assessment and determining the effectiveness of the assessment in measuring the identified outcome(s)? Include meeting dates, topics of discussions, audience and any decisions made.**

The faculty discussed the findings of this assessment during a meeting of the full faculty on August 31, 2016. While the faculty were pleased to see that our students were meeting our expectations in their ability to talk about their work, there was a sense that this cycle should serve as a baseline for an additional round of assessment. The faculty agreed upon the suggested measures in the Action Plan as a way of helping students perform better in this area. A lively discussion also ensued of whether the assessment instrument and process was truly "getting at" the question or could be refined; the department head began this discussion by asking the faculty whether the strong results found in the assessment reflected our sense of how our students are performing in our classes. Faculty were invited to think about norming their assessments by area to avoid potential inflation of scores. It should be noted, however, that the faculty generally agreed

that strong performances in this area (situating one's work in the context of his or her field orally) should be expected of students in the final oral examination, since this is a critical component for which they have prepared and been mentored.

**2. Impact: Discuss the impact of your assessment. Does the data collected answer the question you had about the intended outcome? If not, why? Did you learn anything about the intended outcome you did not anticipate? If so, what? Did the assessment provide sufficient information about the outcome that you can now make informed decisions about programs/practices or specific, directed improvements to programs/practices?**

Because this was the first time the faculty had assessed oral performance, we had no prior expectations about the outcome. Some faculty were initially surprised to see that students were performing as well as they were in this area, hence the discussion about mentioned in #1 about whether the results accurately reflect our students' abilities. It was noted that in some programs students are better able to situate their work in their field in writing (our prior trait for assessment) than orally, whereas in other programs the reverse was found. While the area groups were recommended to conduct norming sessions before filling out the questionnaires this year, there was general agreement that the scores were accurate enough to enable us to make informed decisions about how to improve our students' performance.

**3. What specifically did your assessment show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives? (Strengths)**

This was the first time we have assessed this trait. We plan to use this year's assessment as a baseline for comparison next year, after implementation of this year's Action Plan. As noted earlier, the faculty were pleasantly surprised to see that our graduating students are performing this strongly in this area, which led to a productive discussion of how we are preparing students to speak about their work.

**4. What specifically did your assessment show regarding opportunities for improvement. Describe how you intend to address those issues over the next year. If you met all targets, what specifically do you intend to do in the next assessment cycle to promote continuous improvement in your area?**

As noted in the Action Plan section, while the target was met and exceeded, the faculty stressed the critical importance of students' ability to situate their work in the field orally, both academically and professionally as students prepare to enter the job market or apply for additional graduate programs (PhD and MFA). In addition to mentoring our advisees in this skill, we plan to encourage attendance at conferences and foster department-level opportunities for students to discuss their work with peers and faculty. The Director of Graduate Studies also asked faculty preparing students for their final oral examination to include this skill in their mentorship--most already are. In particular, the faculty recommended the following to support student achievement in this area: Faculty continue to discuss with students the need to engage with larger scholarly and creative communities and how to refine this skill; faculty share with students preparing for the oral examination that this skill will be assessed and include it in their preparation of examinees. The department continue to support student participation in regional and national conferences. Last year, the department head and Graduate Studies Committee approved an unprecedented number (17) student applications for departmental Graduate Travel Awards totaling \$6,000. Up to \$6,000 will be set aside again this year to fund strong proposals. The department continue to sponsor the English Graduate Student Speaker Series (Pizza and a Presenter) we launched last year, and this year open it up to all students wishing to present their work, with priority given to students departing for or returning from conferences. The department consider sponsoring a Three Minute Thesis competition modeled on the successful event held in the College of Arts and Sciences in the past: see <http://artsci.nmsu.edu/en/forms/3-minute-thesis-application> . The area groups discuss this skill with students in their programs, perhaps as a component of an area-specific professionalization workshop.

**5. Specifically, what have you learned about your program, and/or your students' learning?**

We learned that while our program is more obviously focused on preparing students to research and write work that engages in ongoing critical, scholarly, and/or creative debates, it is also graduating students who are able to situate their work in the context of national and international conversations in speaking. In our discussion of the report results, we recognized that we haven't had an explicit conversation as a faculty about how we already prepare students to speak about their work, and what strategies might help students to do this better. In short, we realized that this is a skill we have expected but taken for granted that students will learn on their own. With this discovery behind us, we can address our efforts to helping our students achieve in this area.

**6. Provide a brief summary of your program, department, or unit's activities in the current assessment cycle. You might want to describe a major accomplishment or explain how your area contributed to Baccalaureate Experience learning, or to Vision 2020. Alternatively you may want to discuss how your program is using this assessment to inform decisions and actions for improvement. This summary should be appropriate for broad audiences.**

As noted earlier, the department used this assessment process to establish a baseline for future assessments of students' ability to talk about their work in critically (and aesthetically) informed ways. We also developed an Action Plan to help our students gain more experience and training in this skill in the current assessment cycle. These efforts serve the college's strategic plan and the university's mission in academics and graduation by advancing our graduate students' growth as scholars. It is also hoped that aiding our students in this area will help them compete in a job market that grows ever more competitive.