Assessment Plan for the Graduate Program

The Graduate Program in English articulates learning outcomes required for professional success by doctoral and master’s degree candidates in five skill areas crucial to students’ professional development: critical interpretative and analytical skills; research methods and paradigms; presentation and publication capabilities; pedagogical methods and paradigms; and general professional skills.

For each of these five areas, assessment occurs both in terms of more formal and more informal modes of assessment. Formal assessment may include, for example, graded seminar work or other written evaluations provided by instructors, examiners, or dissertation committee advisors.

Informal assessment may include comments provided by faculty within advising or mentoring relationships, for example, supervised but non-graded workshops or reading groups, or in discussion of areas petitions, dissertation prospectuses, or manuscripts being prepared for publication. Informal assessment may also include candidate self- or peer assessment (for example, in question and answer sessions at the annual graduate student conference, or in candidate’s revision of, or peer review of, manuscripts submitted for publication).

Candidates are expected not simply to master fundamental concepts and research or pedagogical paradigms, but also to innovate upon fundamental concepts and paradigms across the five areas of expertise.

Program Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are organized according to five areas of expertise.

1. Critical Analysis
   - interpret primary research materials in relation to secondary research or other historical materials relevant to the study of narrative, poetics, rhetoric, composition, and cultural production
   - contextualize research materials and methods with respect to problems in bibliographical and archival research as well as to transforming modes of production and dissemination of knowledge

2. Research Methodologies
   - carry out innovative research and present original scholarly essays and dissertations addressing historical and current problems in relevant fields
   - develop complex research projects from concept to completion
   - engage substantively and clearly with both historical and contemporary scholarly studies in their areas of expertise, and respond to other scholars’ work with both analytical rigor and intellectual generosity
• produce innovative and extensible frameworks for humanities research

3. Presentation and Publication
• communicate original findings, concepts and frameworks, uniquely arrayed evidentiary material, and persuasive argument, in ways that clarify both near- and long-term value of research, in stylistically effective ways and across a range of formats and contexts
• edit and revise high-level analytical writing, clarifying argumentation, rhetorical strategies, clarity of research narrative, and other logical and presentational aspects of professional communication
• prepare work for scholarly presentation and publication in the fields stated expertise, and respond to advisor or peer critique or requests for revision

4. Pedagogy
• prepare, execute, and evaluate undergraduate courses emphasizing analytical argument, composition, cultural analysis, and transformations in knowledge production
• communicate research and research value to audiences beyond specific areas of expertise
• mentor peers or students

5. Professionalization
• gain additional professional skills important for placement at degree conferral
• understand institutional processes, structures and practices (job placement; peer review; professional advancement)
• understand intra- or extramural funding processes related to research support for fellowships or post-doctoral positions, and for ladder-faculty research positions
• create, sustain, and extend professional relationships and networks
• engage praxis as a vital dimension of research innovation; engage sites of praxis (not limited to scholarly ones) as opportunities for critical thought and ethical action

Throughout the learning processes, we expect degree candidates to apply the highest ethical standards in professional conduct, and both formal and informal feedback mechanisms have value for ethical training.
Assessment

The Program uses both formal and informal assessment methods.

a) Formal methods of assessment:

- seminars
  - grading of seminar papers, seminar presentations, and overall research seminar performance, and written feedback on papers, presentations, and overall seminar performance.
  - discussion and grading of student work in pro-seminars (both pedagogical training and professionalization seminars)

- by faculty advisors, examination chairs or committees, and dissertation chairs or committees
  - grading of student progress during preparation for Qualifying Examinations I and II
  - examination committee’s verbal and written assessment of Qualifying Examination I (the M.A. qualifying examination) performance
  - examination committee’s verbal and written assessment of Qualifying Examination II (the doctoral qualifying examination)
  - dissertation committee review of the dissertation prospectus
  - grading of student progress during dissertation writing by dissertation committee chair • dissertation chair and committee review of completed dissertation

- by the graduate program director or the Graduate Committee
  - review and approval of examination committees by graduate program director
  - Graduate Committee review of Areas Petitions
  - grading of student progress during the dissertation prospectus-writing period
  - graduate program director review of completion of first and second language requirements • graduate program director review of misc. petitions related to degree progress
  - grading of student engagement with research colloquia by graduate program director
  - annual overall performance review of each candidate by the program graduate director
  - degree requirement checks and advancement to candidacy notification

- by students
  - online evaluation of seminars or courses and instructors by students
  - yearly graduate student submission, to the graduate director, of biography-bibliography forms indicating recent honors, publications, and other professional development indices
b) Informal methods of assessment:

- by faculty advisors and/or the graduate program director
  - discussion or commentary provided during office hours or electronically by advising faculty during preparation of qualifying examinations, areas petitions, dissertation prospectus, and dissertation writing
  - faculty-supervised but non-graded and extracurricular research workshops, reading groups, or writing groups
  - open fora on a range of topics held by the graduate program director in collaboration with the Graduate Students in English Association (GSEA)

- by students
  - additional contextual opportunities provided for developing professionalization skills include participation on departmental committees as GSEA representatives; and for developing self- and peer-assessment, the Department advises and materially supports the annual national research conference hosted by the GSEA