

Form E-1A for Boston College "Literature Core" Course Assessment
Dept. of Romance Languages & Literatures (May 2023)

1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed?

Students enrolled in RLL Literature Core courses will be expected, at the end of the course, to demonstrate the following abilities:

- ¶ Students will demonstrate the ability to read and evaluate texts critically.
- ¶ Students will demonstrate proficiency in employing academic prose to effectively sustain an original literary argument supported by textual evidence.
- ¶ Students will demonstrate an understanding of the differences between literary genres.
- ¶ Students will be familiar with representative texts drawn from a wide range of periods and be equipped to engage in an informed and critical way with similar texts in the future.
- ¶ Students will be able to identify and analyze the distinctive features of literary productions.

2) Where are these learning outcomes published?

They are published on the "Undergraduate Program" page of the RLL Department website:

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/romance-languages/undergraduate-programs.html>

3. Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

- A. Direct Evidence: Analysis in-class discussions, quizzes and exams, and a representative sampling of final papers.
- B. Indirect Evidence: Student survey. An online Qualtrics student survey is administered in each Lit Core class, asking how well they believe they have achieved the learning outcomes, what they found especially helpful, and what suggestions they have for improvement of the course in future iterations.

This year, in carrying out our assessment, we chose to focus on the specific Learning Outcome: "Students will be familiar with representative texts drawn from a wide range of periods and be equipped to engage in an informed and critical way with similar texts in the future."

The reason for this choice is the general feeling among all of our instructors, teaching in any language, including English, that our undergrads find the mastery of good expository prose an especially difficult challenge and we wanted to double-check this year that last year's very positive results were not an anomaly.

C. Faculty Group Discussion: the Lit Core Instructors meet as a group to share their experiences and impressions of the semester regarding their work with their students in their progress towards the Learning Outcomes.

- 4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)**

The evidence is interpreted by the instructors of the courses in question who submits a summary of their discussions to the Dept Chair (who is also the dept “Core Liaison”). The results of the online student surveys and the discussions by the Lit Core instructors are then also shared with and discussed by the entire FT faculty of the department, who might suggest revisions in light of the collective experience of the department in Core courses that they have taught in past semesters.

- 5) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)**

Results of 2023 Assessment Process:

Both the examination of student work and the students' own feedback (via the online Qualtrics survey) conclude that this learning outcome has been met. In the online survey, the overwhelming majority of the 68 students who responded indicated that they "strongly" agreed and 8 "mildly" agreed that the LO had been reached.

However, this year's cohort – in addition to the 4 sections of Spanish “Contextos” (taught in Spanish) included one Lit Core section conducted entirely in English (“Love, Sexuality and Gender: The Western Literary Tradition”). Final assessment of student work by the professor in question identified a different problem area: that of the ability to write mature, clear expository prose. Of the 20 students in the course, at least 15 were noticeably deficient in this skill. Though the professor gave abundant feedback on the required essays with regard to the expository prose and engaged in some discussion thereof during class time, this in the end proved insufficient. Hence, the next time the course will be taught, the syllabus will be changed to include in as many classes as possible (no fewer than one per week), remedial exercise in expository writing taken from one of the leading text books on the subjects such as Warriner’s English *Grammar and Composition*.

Results of 2022 Assessment Process:

Last year, in the course of discussing the Lit Core students written skills, the faculty questioned their students' skills in clear, coherent, mature oral communication. Few students are able to express themselves in oral communication effortlessly and gracefully (i.e. in complete sentences, without the frequent interjections of “You know,” “kind of like,” etc.) The latter skill (of mature oral communication) is not one of our official Learning Outcome and some debate occurred as to whether it should be. Nonetheless, as a remedy, instructors included in their syllabus more formal opportunities for the students to deliver oral presentations in class. Either because the latter feature worked or we had a much different cohort of students (that is, with better oral skills), this year no significant deficiency in oral communication was noted. Nonetheless, we will continue to make formal oral presentations a regular part of our syllabi.

6) Date of the most recent program review. (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

The last Self-study and External Review were carried out in 2010.