Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program: English/ English Language Learning

1) Have formal learning outcomes for the department’s Core courses been developed? What are they? (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

PHILOSOPHY:

Literature, in all its genres, is a fundamental vehicle for understanding human experiences. By taking three credits of the Core Curriculum in literature, students read in order to explore the characteristics and values of their own and other cultures; to gain insights into issues of permanent importance and contemporary urgency; and to distinguish and appreciate the linguistic and formal satisfactions of literary art.

To read literature critically is to examine the human condition through language’s expressive power and to place the reception of literary works in cultural, historical, and social contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Each course should develop students’ capacity to perform close readings of texts and to read and write with clarity and engagement. In ELL Core, this attention to writing includes an awareness of English grammar and syntax conventions and recognition of patterns of error in writing in order to move toward native-like production.
- Each course should allow for an understanding of literary texts within their historical and cultural contexts and provide an introduction to literary terminology and genres.

2) Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific. (Where are the department’s expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The English Department website is currently being updated.

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

Direct Assessment of Student Work:

- The Director will assess the exam results (see below for a more detailed analysis) from her spring 2016 1079 section. Results will be compared between the mid-term and end of term exam to determine if student achievement has risen.
- Weekly writing assignments that require students to respond to a text through analysis, criticism, reflection.
- At least one formal paper requiring students to do a close reading of one (or several related) literary works.
- One formal presentation where each student, with a partner, leads her classmates in a discussion of a literary work s/he has read and analyzed closely in order to take on the role of “teacher” for one session. Students work closely with the instructor (and BC research librarian when appropriate) to prepare for this.
Analysis of Exam Results:

- Please see Appendix A (exam rubric) and Appendix B (exam score breakdown) for detailed information. Overall, the average Close Reading Skills scores increased 6% (from 76% to 82%). 10 of the 15 students improved their scores, with individuals scoring up to 20% higher on the end-of-term exam. Grammar Skills scores did not show improvement, with final scores on average 1% lower. 2 students improved their scores, 7 had the same score, and 4 had lower scores.

Indirect Assessment of Student Work:

- STUDENT REFLECTION: submitted at the end of the semester requiring students to assess their own progress related to certain course outcomes. Spring 2016 reflections reflected the following:
  - 67% of students reported improvement in their writing
    - Of these, 100% reported an improvement in writing with clarity and engagement
    - Of these, only 10% reported an improvement in grammar and syntax
  - 67% of students reported an improvement in their ability to perform a close reading of a text
  - 53% reported gaining a greater understanding of a text within its historical and cultural context

Analysis of Data:

- Students who reported an improvement in their ability to write with clarity and engagement cited the memoir and weekly journals as assignments that helped them to improve in these areas. These assignments, therefore, should continue to be a component of the course.
- Methods for addressing grammar and syntax in student writing should continue to be explored. Currently, students are required to edit four assignments to make grammar and syntax changes during the semester with the support of the instructor. This requirement could be increased or, if a group of students shared similar L1’s, certain grammar features could be taught in class periodically throughout the semester. Strategies for grammar improvement should be explored with ELL staff.
- Students who reported an improvement in their ability to perform a close reading of a text most frequently cited the Teaching Session as being most helpful in developing this skill. This component of the course is perhaps the most important mechanism for promoting close reading skills and should continue to be part of the course.

- COURSE EVALUATIONS: will ask students to assess their progress on specific course outcomes. (Evaluations have not yet been disseminated to faculty.)

Overall Program Assessment: The director works closely with her instructors in the following manner to determine whether course outcomes are being met:

- Meetings held every semester with instructors to discuss best practices and teaching strategies to support the course learning outcomes
- Director surveys ELL instructors about their experiences/observations teaching for the program at the end of each semester. She uses these to inform discussions related to pedagogical topics for upcoming staff meetings.
- Director observes ELL instructors teaching during their first semester working in the program. Director provides both oral and formal written feedback.
• Director has begun an “ELL Instructors at BC” blog to share ideas and best practices for supporting ELL’s.

Findings: Grammar continues to be a challenge for the following reasons
  - Not enough class time to teach specific grammatical/syntactical structures
  - Students come with a diversity of L1’s and linguistic skills

Recommendations: Develop weekly drop-in grammar workshops outside of class (much like the model at Boston University) where students work on a particular feature (verb tense and aspect, for example)

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 ELL Director will interpret evidence in the following manner:
  • During Spring 2016, The Director assessed exam results from her 1079 section. Results were compared between the mid-term and end of term exam to determine if student achievement has risen based on certain course outcomes.

  • During Fall 2016, FWS for ELL (ENGL 1009) portfolios will be assessed. Each will include a piece of intake writing and a final short essay. Of the approximately 105 portfolios to be submitted from the 7 ELL sections, 25 will be randomly chosen (to reflect strong, intermediate, and weak writing). These will be normed by the Director of ELL and one ELL instructor, looking at 1 to 2 course outcomes.

The ELL Director and her staff interpret evidence by:
  • Meeting once during the semester to discuss student achievement and pedagogical practices for supporting course learning outcomes

Report compiled by Lynne Christy Anderson, Director, English Language Learning
May 23, 2016
APPENDIX A

This is the rubric used to score essay questions on the mid-term and final exams for ENGL 1079 Spring 2016

- **20 POINTS: You responded to the question fully by:**
  - Displaying an awareness of literary genres and terminology. (10 pts)
  - Demonstrating a strong ability to interpret and analyze the text. (10 pts)

- **10 POINTS: Your writing was clear, coherent, and organized. Grammar issues did not interfere with one’s reading of your response.**
## APPENDIX B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Close Reading Skills</th>
<th>Grammar Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Midterm Exam Writing Score</td>
<td>Final Exam Writing Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arslan</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshu</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sijie</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivi</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanlin</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yosie</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>