

Assessment Plan for the Master's in English

The broad goals of the Master's in English program at Illinois State University are as follows:

- The program seeks to develop students' abilities to read a variety of difficult texts critically;
- The program seeks to develop students' abilities to synthesize ideas and information from a range of sources and to use that knowledge as the context for exploring new ideas;
- The program seeks to develop student's abilities to speak and write thoughtfully, creatively, and persuasively in a variety of rhetorical situations;
- The program seeks to develop students' abilities to progress from acquiring received knowledge to critically thinking about knowledge and then to creating knowledge;
- The program seeks to enable students to understand the social effects of language and to be able to use language for particular social effects.

These broad goals will be assessed by the following objectives unique to each of the five emphases in the Master's in English Program:

Creative Writing

Students in Creative Writing should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of several critical theories about literature;
- demonstrate advanced knowledge of writers of achievement in selected genres;
- demonstrate an understanding of achievements by established and non-established writers in a selected genre;
- write literature; and
- write a creative thesis demonstrating high merit that includes a critical/theoretical preface and/or afterword.

Children's Literature

Students in Children's Literature should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the historical and theoretical foundations of Children's and Adolescent Literature;
- demonstrate an ability to integrate appropriate Children's and Adolescent texts into a course whose primary focus is not Children's or Adolescent Literature;
- demonstrate an understanding of the principles of Children's and Adolescent Literature book selection and a familiarity with the issues involved with book challenges and censorship;
- read and demonstrate familiarity with a variety of Children's and Adolescent texts from a culturally diverse range of historic periods and national origins;
- demonstrate familiarity with the ways in which Children's and Adolescent texts are produced and used;

- use a wide range of critical and cultural theory to engage and respond to a variety of Children's and Adolescent texts;
- demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of genres of Children's and Adolescent texts;
- demonstrate ability to place a wide range of Children's and Adolescent texts in appropriate generic, national, historical, and aesthetic context;
- demonstrate ability to bring appropriate and effective interpretive strategies to a wide range of Children's and Adolescent texts;
- create written and verbal arguments supporting interpretations of a wide range of Children's and Adolescent texts using appropriate critical reading and research.

Literary and Cultural Studies

Students in Literary and Cultural Studies should be able to:

- read and demonstrate advanced knowledge of a variety of texts from a culturally diverse range of historic periods and national origins;
- demonstrate familiarity with the ways in which texts are produced;
- use a wide range of critical and cultural theory to engage and respond to texts verbally and in writing;
- engage texts from a wide variety of genres through advanced research;
- place a variety of texts in appropriate generic, national, historical, and aesthetic contexts through advanced research;
- bring to bear on a range of texts appropriate and effective interpretive strategies; and
- through critical reading and research, create written and verbal arguments supporting interpretations of a range of texts.

TESOL

Goal: Knowledge of Language and Linguistics

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the field of linguistics, its subfields and the importance/role of linguistics in matters of language education;
- Students will learn and practice linguistic description at the levels of phonetics/phonology, morphology, and syntax for the purpose of developing an understanding of language structure beyond one's native language or the narrow range of foreign languages offered in most U.S. high schools and colleges; and
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of language variation, and language change in terms of what those areas of study tell us about the way humans use language and how that language use comes to be structured in human communication;
- Students will gain an understanding that successful language use has social as well as cognitive aspects;
- Students will become knowledgeable about cultural factors in language use and in second language acquisition;
- Students will become aware of social and institutional barriers to successful second language acquisition that immigrants and other language learners may face.

Goal: Knowledge of Second Language Learning Theories

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental concepts and principles of the knowledge base pertaining to the learning of English as a second or foreign language;
- Students will be able to critically evaluate second language learning theories and engage in a systematic investigation of the knowledge base to inform their own or others' teaching practices; and
- Students will demonstrate that they know how to plan and manage a second language class effectively and how to evaluate and selectively apply a range of teaching strategies as appropriate to their students' needs and characteristics.

Goal: Knowledge of Second Language Instruction and Assessment

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand and critically evaluate different theories, hypotheses, models, and research findings in second language learning;
- Students will be able to identify and understand the linguistic and cognitive developmental stages English language learners pass through in various learning contexts;
- Students will be able to create and develop instructional techniques and materials to accommodate the linguistic and cognitive developmental stages of English language learners, drawing upon their understanding of the theories and approaches to second language learning;
- Students will be able to demonstrate an advanced understanding of the terminology and fundamental concepts of language testing and test construction;
- Students will be able to select and construct test items, tasks, and test types that are appropriate for a given situation, and to use alternative forms of assessment in the classroom, in addition to (or in place of) traditional achievement tests; and
- Students will demonstrate advanced knowledge of identification, placement, exiting, and monitoring of English language learners, and of supporting them both in and outside of the schools.

English Studies:

Students in the integrative English Studies focus should be able to:

- demonstrate verbally and in writing connections among the various areas of English Studies;
- demonstrate verbally and in writing an advanced knowledge of the similarities and differences among the areas of English Studies;
- read and demonstrate advanced knowledge of a variety of texts from a culturally diverse range of historic periods and national origins;
- use a wide range of critical and cultural theory to engage and respond to texts verbally and in writing;
- engage texts from a wide variety of genres through advanced research;

- place a variety of texts in appropriate generic, national, historical, and aesthetic contexts through advanced research;
- bring to bear on a range of texts appropriate and effective interpretive strategies; and
- through critical reading and research, create written and verbal arguments supporting interpretations of a range of texts.

At the heart of the Assessment Plan for the Master’s in English program at Illinois State University are the primary values of the Graduate Faculty in English as articulated in various focus-group sessions and how those values are translated into the desired abilities of our graduates.

Values of the Graduate Faculty in English Studies:

- English Studies model that integrates epistemologies from various subdisciplines;
- Professional range of reading, writing, and oral skills across a variety of rhetorical situations in the profession;
- Pertinent theoretical and content information that is appropriate to the wide range of specializations in the department;
- Respect for the differences in disciplines, perspectives, epistemologies, languages, cultures, and economies that comprise English Studies;
- Importance of understanding historical developments and contexts as a component of any specialization and of the larger field;
- Professional development, professional ethics, and the ability to participate in the discourse of the academy;
- What the professoriate contributes to society, with the goal of justifying the production of public intellectuals and literary artists to people outside of the academy.

Desired Abilities of Students in the Master’s in English program (in addition to specific objectives of the various foci listed above)

- a. Engagement with cultural, global, and economic contexts;
- b. Writing, reading, technological, and oral communication skills that prepare students to participate in their chosen fields;
- c. Theoretical and content information appropriate to the student’s area of focus and the ability to articulate the importance of those ideas;
- d. Ability to historicize and contextualize areas of study;
- e. Research and bibliographic methods commensurate with the student’s field;
- f. An appreciation of the public role of the academy and the ability to participate in the public arena professionally and ethically.

The Master’s in English program at Illinois State University has instituted an extensive and systematic plan of assessing student learning keyed to the desired abilities (a-f) outlined above:

How Desired Abilities of Students/Objectives of Program Are Assessed Systematically

- All candidates for the Master's in English degree complete a minimum of 10 or 11 courses: 10 if the student chooses to write a thesis, and 11 if the student chooses to take the comprehensive exam (effective early assessment of desired abilities a-f);
- All candidates for the Master's in English must a) take a comprehensive exam; b) write a thesis; or c) complete a portfolio (effective assessment of desired abilities a, b, c, d, and e in particular);
- All candidates for the Master's in English are encouraged to present their research and creative productions at local, state, national, and international academic conferences (effective assessment of desired abilities a-f); and
- All candidates for the Master's in English are encouraged to publish their research and creative productions in nationally recognized, peer-reviewed venues (effective assessment of desired abilities a-f).