***STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM***

***SUMMARY FORM AY 2015-2017***

**Degree and Program Name: MA in English**

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**PART ONE**

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| What are the learning objectives? | How, where, and when are they assessed? | What are the expectations? | What are the results? | Committee/ person responsible? How are results shared? |
| 1. English graduate students will develop and refine their critical thinking and written communication skills. | **1A:** Direct assessment of first-semester and final-semester students: ENG 5000 presentations evaluated by GSC via rubric. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric. Comparative analysis of first-semester students and graduating students.  **1B:** Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **1C:** Evaluation of thesis prospectuses by GSC via rubric.  **1D**: Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **1E**: Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **1F**: Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Gathering of student feedback through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on GSC), surveys, exit interviews, or other indirect measures (i.e., informal one-on-one discussion). Graduate Student Research Colloquium and English 5000 symposium serve as vehicles for faculty to provide feedback on students’ current research and for students to improve their presentation and communication skills. | Students are expected to complete written projects that identify problems appropriate to the field of literary studies, composition and rhetoric, professional writing, or creative writing. Students are expected to deal with these problems in ways that show mastery of field-specific methodologies. Critical thinking and written communication expectations indicated on evaluation rubrics for graduate coursework and prospectuses (attached). Students seeking opportunity to present their work at Graduate Research Colloquium must submit proposal. Students provide direct feedback on MA Program Survey of English Graduate Students. | **1A:** In the ENG 5000 symposium, 27% of student presentations were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for critical thinking. Of the 27 scholarly and creative theses assessed during the assessment period, 22 (81%) were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for critical thinking. In the ENG 5000 symposium and in thesis defenses, critical thinking was further assessed through students’ ability to respond to questions concerning their project. After one semester in the graduate program, 22% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to respond to questions. At the thesis defense (at the end of their program), 84% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to respond to questions. 15 out of 18 (83%) students completing scholarly and creative theses during the assessment period were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for written communication skills.  **1B:** In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate courses, 82% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for critical thinking skills, and 74.5% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for writing skills.  **1C**: 77% of scholarly and creative thesis prospectuses were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for critical thinking. 57.6% of scholarly and creative thesis prospectuses were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for written communication skills.  **1D:** 100% of the independent study proposals were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for written communication skills.  **1E**: 98% of all 2015-17 syllabi explicitly list goals that directly support this learning objective. 100% emphasize—through course descriptions, assignments, and assessment—student performance on substantive writing and oral communication tasks.  **1F**: 2016 Distinguished Thesis shared the overall CAH award. | The GSC strives to involve all graduate faculty in the assessment of our graduate program. Graduate Coordinator and GSC evaluate all thesis prospectuses, independent studies, exam petitions, English 5000 presentations, and thesis defenses by rubric. Graduate course instructors evaluate all students in individual courses by rubric. Thesis committees evaluate each thesis and oral defense by rubric. Ongoing monitoring of program is shared with department faculty via executive committee and department meetings. President of the English Graduate Student Organization gathers feedback from students through focus groups or exit interviews and reports to Graduate Coordinator. Thesis and exam defenses open to public. English Graduate Student Organization gathers proposals from students who want to present at Graduate Research Colloquium and GSC referees through process of blind review. Graduate Research Colloquium open to public. |
| 2. English graduate students will acquire focused understanding of particular literary works within appropriate critical and/or historical contexts. | **2A:** Direct assessment of first-semester and final-semester students: ENG 5000 presentations evaluated by GSC via rubric. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric. Comparative analysis of first-semester students and graduating students.  **2B:** Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **2C:** Evaluation of thesis prospectuses by GSC via rubric.  **2D**: Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **2E**: Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **2F**: Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Gathering of student feedback through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on GSC), surveys, exit interviews, or other indirect measures (i.e., informal one-on-one discussion). Graduate Student Research Colloquium and English 5000 symposium serve as vehicles for faculty to provide feedback on students’ current research and for students to improve their presentation and communication skills. | Students are expected to complete written projects that identify problems appropriate to the field of literary studies, composition and rhetoric, professional writing, or creative writing. Students are expected to deal with these problems in ways that show mastery of field-specific methodologies. Critical thinking and written communication expectations indicated on evaluation rubrics for graduate coursework and prospectuses (attached). Students seeking opportunity to present their work at Graduate Research Colloquium must submit proposal. Students provide direct feedback on MA Program Survey of English Graduate Students. | **2A.** In the ENG 5000 symposium, 52% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for demonstrating focused understanding of their chosen literary texts, while 22.5% were ranked in the top two categories for ability to place those texts in their appropriate critical and historical context and for ability to convey the significance of the argument. For the thesis capstone during this assessment period, committee members ranked 85% of students above 2.5 (out of 4) for depth of understanding in their fields and ability to place those texts in their appropriate critical and historical context; committee members ranked 95% above 2.5 (out of 4) for focused understanding of their topics. In oral defense of the thesis, both GSC members and thesis committees ranked 88% above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to place that topic in its appropriate critical and historical context and 72% above 2.5 (out of 4) for making a substantive contribution to the chosen field.**2B**. In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate courses, 72% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to think critically about professional concepts in the course.  **2C**. For thesis prospectuses in, 65% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for demonstrated understanding of research in field of study, and 62% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for development of a project that added to knowledge in the field.  **2D**. 100% of independent study proposals were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for basic grasp of appropriate research and literature in chosen area.  **2E**. 100% of syllabi emphasized the assigned texts’ historical and critical context through course descriptions and/or stated objectives, and assigned reading. | The GSC strives to involve all graduate faculty in the assessment of our graduate program. Graduate Coordinator and GSC evaluate all thesis prospectuses, independent studies, exam petitions, English 5000 presentations, and thesis defenses by rubric. Graduate course instructors evaluate all students in individual courses by rubric. Thesis committees evaluate each thesis and oral defense by rubric. Ongoing monitoring of program is shared with department faculty via executive committee and department meetings. President of the English Graduate Student Organization gathers feedback from students through focus groups or exit interviews and reports to Graduate Coordinator. Thesis and exam defenses open to public. English Graduate Student Organization gathers proposals from students who want to present at Graduate Research Colloquium and GSC referees through process of blind review. Graduate Research Colloquium open to public. |
| 3. English graduate students will develop appropriate research and bibliographic skills. | **3A.** Direct assessment of first-semester and final-semester students: ENG 5000 presentations evaluated by GSC via rubric. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric. Comparative analysis of first-semester students and graduating students.  **3B**. Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **3C**. Evaluation of thesis prospectuses by GSC via rubric.  **3D**. Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **3E**. Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **3F**. Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Gathering of student feedback through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on GSC), surveys, exit interviews, or other indirect measures (i.e., informal one-on-one discussion). Graduate Student Research Colloquium and English 5000 symposium serve as vehicles for faculty to provide feedback on students’ current research and for students to improve their presentation and communication skills. | Students are expected to master citation and bibliographic formats of the Modern Language Association. Students are expected to develop a broad proficiency in the use of electronic databases, archives, and print resources for the completion of written research projects. Expectations in research and bibliographic skills indicated on evaluation rubrics for graduate coursework and prospectuses (attached). Students seeking opportunity to present their work at Graduate Research Colloquium must submit proposal. | **3A**. In the ENG 5000 symposium, 32% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to engage substantively with appropriate research. In the thesis capstone, 86.5% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to engage substantively with appropriate research. In their defenses, 89% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to engage substantively with appropriate research. In the creative thesis capstone, 94% of the students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to convey understanding of relevant or influential texts. In the creative theses defenses, 64% of the students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) by both the GSC and their thesis committees for their ability to convey understanding of relevant or influential texts.  **3B**. In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate courses, 66%of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to document research using appropriate citation formats, and 60.5% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to engage substantively with appropriate research.**3C**. In thesis prospectuses (for literary studies, prof. writing, and comp/rhet) 82% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4). For thesis prospectuses in creative writing, 68% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4).  **3D**. Of independent study proposals, 100% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4).  **3E**. 100% of literary studies syllabi culminate in a major research project; 100% of syllabi in comp/rhet and professional writing require responses to specific articles and methodologies; 100% of creative writing syllabi culminate in heavily revised creative project (with most requiring some form of public reading). |  |
| 4. English graduate students in the Creative Writing concentration will gain skill in creative expression. | **4A**. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric.  **4B**. Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **4C**. Evaluation of thesis prospectuses by GSC via rubric.  **4D**. Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **4E**. Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **4F**. Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Gathering of student feedback through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on GSC), surveys, exit interviews, or other indirect measures (i.e., informal one-on-one discussion). Student reading series and James K. Johnson Writing Awards serve as a vehicle for faculty to offer feedback on graduate students’ creative work and for students to hone their oral expression and presentation skills. English 5025 (a required course for this concentration) focuses on professionalizing and enhancing performance ability of creative writing students. | Students in creative writing are expected to develop techniques of prose, poetry, and script, and to write reflectively about their techniques, demonstrating a strong understanding of broader aesthetic contexts. Expectations concerning awareness of genre, marketability, audience, and clarity indicated on evaluation rubric for prospectuses (attached). | **4A**. Of the 6 creative theses completed during the assessment period, all (100%) were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to convey an artistic purpose/vision, mastery of significant aspects of craft, and creativity/originality. At the creative thesis defenses, all students (100%) were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) by their thesis committees for ability to convey the project’s artistic purpose and mastery of significant aspects of craft. GSC members ranked 100% of students above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to convey the project’s artistic purpose and 83% for mastery of significant aspects of craft. 100% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) by both the GSC and thesis directors in performance ability.**4B**. In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate creative writing courses, 89% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to think critically about creative writing concepts covered in the courses, and 95% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for demonstration of creativity and originality.  **4C**. Of Creative Writing thesis prospectuses, 85% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to discuss the project’s artistic purpose beyond the personal. 73% were ranked 2.5 or better (out of 4) for ability to discuss specific aspects of craft relevant to the project.  **4D**. N/A  **4E**. The ENG 5020 and ENG5025 syllabi specifically address ways of stimulating creativity and experimentation in student writing. The 5025 syllabus culminates in a public reading of students’ creative work. | The GSC strives to involve all graduate faculty in the assessment of our graduate program. Graduate Coordinator and GSC evaluate all thesis prospectuses, independent studies, and thesis defenses by rubric. Rubrics for Creative Writing students were developed in conjunction with the Creative Writing Committee. Graduate course instructors evaluate all students in individual courses by rubric. Thesis committees evaluate each thesis and oral defense by rubric. Ongoing monitoring of program is shared with department faculty via executive committee and department meetings. President of the English Graduate Student Organization gathers feedback from students through focus groups or exit interviews and reports to Graduate Coordinator. Thesis defenses open to public. The results of the MA Program Survey of English Graduate Students were reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator and Studies Committee AY 2015-16 and shared with the English Graduate Student Organization. Note: English Graduate Student Organization did not complete its own report for AY 2016-17. |
| 5. English graduate students in the Composition/Rhetoric and Professional Writing concentrations will acquire focused understanding of particular areas and problems within the theory and practice of composition studies | **5A**. Direct assessment of first-semester and final-semester students: ENG 5000 presentations evaluated by GSC via rubric. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric. Comparative analysis of first-semester students and graduating students.  **5B**. Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **5C**. Evaluation of thesis prospectuses by GSC via rubric.  **5D**. Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **5E**. Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **5F**. Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Gathering of student feedback through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on GSC), surveys, exit interviews, or other indirect measures (i.e., informal one-on-one discussion). Graduate Student Research Colloquium and English 5000 symposium serve as vehicles for faculty to provide feedback on students’ current research and for students to improve their presentation and communication skills. | Students are expected to identify problems appropriate to the field of Composition/Rhetoric or Professional Writing and to deal with such problems in ways that engage with the methodologies of the field. Students are expected to gain understanding of various schools of Composition and Rhetoric Studies or Professional Writing. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of research ethics when dealing with human subjects. Expectations for understanding research in field of study and for understanding contribution to field indicated on evaluation rubrics for graduate coursework and prospectuses (attached). A new rubric for the Applied Thesis in Professional Writing is being developed. Students may apply to present their work at Graduate Research Colloquium. | **5A**. During the assessment period, there were no ENG 5000 presentations for Comp/Rhet or Professional Writing. For the Comp/Rhet thesis capstone from the assessment period, committee members ranked 100% of students above 2.5 (out of 4) for depth of understanding in their fields, focused understanding of their topics, and ability to place those texts in their appropriate theoretical and pedagogical context. In the literary studies thesis capstone, committee members ranked 100% above 2.5 (out of 4) for focused understanding of their topics. In oral defense of the thesis, both GSC members and thesis committees ranked 100% above 2.5 (out of 4) for ability to place that topic in its appropriate theoretical and pedagogical context and 80% above 2.5 (out of 4) for making a substantive contribution to the chosen field.  **5B**. In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate courses in Composition/Rhetoric or Professional Writing, 87% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their ability to think critically about Composition/Rhetoric or Professional Writing concepts covered in the courses.  **5C.** For thesis prospectuses in Composition/Rhetoric, 63% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for demonstrated understanding of research in field of study, and 48% were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for development of a project that added to knowledge in the field.  **5D**. 100% (out of two) of Independent Study proposals in Comp/Rhet or Prof Writing were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for basic grasp of appropriate research and literature in chosen topic.  **5E**. 100% syllabi in these fields ask students to study and respond—both orally and in writing—to specific issues and problems within the field. | The GSC strives to involve all graduate faculty in the assessment of our graduate program. Graduate Coordinator and GSC evaluate all thesis prospectuses, independent studies, exam petitions, English 5000 presentations, and thesis defenses by rubric. Graduate course instructors evaluate all students in individual courses by rubric. Thesis committees evaluate each thesis and oral defense by rubric. Ongoing monitoring of program is shared with department faculty via executive committee and department meetings. President of the English Graduate Student Organization gathers feedback from students through focus groups or exit interviews and reports to Graduate Coordinator. Thesis and exam defenses open to public. English Graduate Student Organization gathers proposals from students who want to present at Graduate Research Colloquium and GSC referees through process of blind review. Graduate Research Colloquium open to public. The results of the MA Program Survey of English Graduate Students were reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator and Studies Committee AY 2015-16 and shared with the English Graduate Student Organization. Note: English Graduate Student Organization did not complete its own report for AY 2016-17. |
| 6. English graduate students will prepare for further advanced study in literature or for educational, professional, and other careers. | **6A**. Direct assessment of first- and final-semester students: ENG 5000 presentations evaluated by GSC via rubric. Evaluation of thesis and oral defense of thesis by thesis committee and GSC via rubric. Comparative analysis of first-semester students and graduating students.  **6B**. Evaluation of students each semester by graduate faculty via rubric.  **6C**. Submission of thesis prospectuses and exam petitions to the GSC for approval  **6D**. Assessment of Independent Study proposals by GSC via rubric.  **6E**. Alignment of graduate course syllabi with learning objectives.  **6F.** Evaluation of Distinguished Thesis Award Nominees via rubric. Indirect gathering of student feedback concerning preparation for advanced study or career through student liaison (the English Graduate Student Organization President who serves on Graduate Studies Committee), surveys or exit interviews. English 5000 symposium, Graduate Student Research Colloquium, and ENG5025 professionalize students. Application to Teach 1001 or 1002 as a Graduate Assistant professionalizes students. MA Program website and MA Program Timeline help students understand program expectations and set long term goals for the future. Graduate students are encouraged to present at conferences both on and off campus. | Students are expected to complete coursework and capstone while demonstrating progress toward proficiency and professionalism in literary studies, composition/rhetoric research, professional writing, or creative writing. Students may apply for opportunity to present their work at Graduate Research Colloquium. The Application to Teach 1001 or 1002 as a Graduate Assistant requires students to put together a professional application for a teaching position. | **6A**. In the English 5000 symposium and thesis oral defenses, preparation for advanced study is assessed through students’ professionalism when presenting. In English 5000, 71% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their professionalism. In the thesis oral defenses, 94% of students were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for professionalism. All (100%) creative writing theses were ranked by their directors above 2.5 (out of 4) for demonstrated suitability for dissemination.  **6B**. In instructor-generated assessments of student performance in individual graduate courses, 73% of student performances were ranked above 2.5 (out of 4) for their demonstrated preparation for future study and/or work in this area.  **6C**. A successful thesis prospectus or exam petition indicates professionalism through its content and format. During the assessment period, 94% of thesis prospectuses were approved; those that were not approved were subsequently approved after revisions in response to GSC input.  **6D**. 86% of independent study proposals in all areas ranked in the top two categories.  **6E**. 100% of syllabi offer students some kind of pre-professional activity, such as presenting at a symposium, orally defending a paper, teaching or co-teaching a class, or leading class discussion.  **6F**. 2 enrolled MA students presented at Grad Expo; 12 received Williams Travel Grants; 14 presented at external professional conferences. Of 17 recent grads, 5are attending PhD programs, and 12 are working in areas related to their field of study. | The GSC strives to involve all graduate faculty in the assessment of our graduate program. Graduate Coordinator and GSC evaluate all thesis prospectuses, independent studies, exam petitions, English 5000 presentations, and thesis defenses by rubric. Graduate course instructors evaluate all students in individual courses by rubric. Thesis committees evaluate each thesis and oral defense by rubric. Ongoing monitoring of program is shared with department faculty via executive committee and department meetings. President of the English Graduate Student Organization gathers feedback from students through focus groups or exit interviews and reports to Graduate Coordinator. Thesis and exam defenses open to public. English Graduate Student Organization gathers proposals from students who want to present at Graduate Research Colloquium and GSC referees through process of blind review. Graduate Research Colloquium open to public. The results of the MA Program Survey of English Graduate Students were reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator and GSC and shared with the English Graduate Student Organization, Graduate Coordinator and GSC. Applications to Teach 1001 or 1002 as a Graduate Assistant are assessed by the Graduate Coordinator, Director of Composition, and Director and Assistant Director of the Writing Center. |

**PART TWO**

Describe your program’s assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the CASA Director’s comments on last year’s report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

As was noted in the most recent report, the English Department’s MA Program has a robust, comprehensive assessment procedure that assesses each significant moment in a graduate student’s career, from the first semester’s Graduate Student Symposium (coordinated through the required English 5000 course) to the oral defense of the student’s capstone project. While overall student enrollment in the MA program was lower during this last biannual review, more graduate students completed their MA during this review and assessment results show similar results to the previous cycle, with slight upward trends in some areas.

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) continues to oversee and refine the assessment process. While slight revisions were made to the rubrics in order to allow for easier online distribution, no significant changes were made to the rubrics. Each rubric was designed for a very specific purpose and remain highly effective for that role. While the GSC had hoped that it could automate the collection of data—through a computerized database—that goal has not been fully implemented for two important reasons. First, due to the University’s reduction in staff over the past two years, the English Department lost one of its office managers who was to oversee the central database. Second, although the Graduate Coordinator sends out rubrics (via email) to each assessment event, many faculty still prefer to print out their rubric and return a hard copy. Because of this, the Graduate Coordinator now routinely emails rubrics and hands out hard copies of each rubric for each assessment opportunity in order ensure a high return.

The GSC is pleased that all department faculty are involved in the assessment process. Since the English 5000 Symposium and the oral capstone defense are open to the public, assessment data is gathered from all faculty at these events. Faculty who are not on the GSC and who otherwise may not know about graduate-level assessment get the opportunity to learn about assessment through this participation. As in previous assessment cycles, course instructors and thesis and exam committees complete rubrics rating student performance. These rubrics supplement those of GSC members, who attend defenses and graduate student symposia.

Other less quantitative but highly effective means of assessment remain in place. English 5000, Introduction to Methods and Issues of Graduate Studies, functions as a baseline measure of student preparation at the beginning of their graduate careers. The Coordinator consults with ENG 5000 instructors on students’ preparedness. The Coordinator also meets with graduate students each semester to advise on course selection and monitor their progress. The GSC also monitors student achievements through discussions of thesis, exam, and independent study proposals, as well as attendance at symposia and defenses. The president of the English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO) is a member of the GSC, and EGSO is also involved in soliciting contributions for the Graduate Research Colloquium, which allows a graduate student to present research to faculty. Such presentations, as well as the James K. Johnson writing awards not only help students professionalize, but also give the GSC an opportunity to assess program success. The Application to Teach 1001 or 1002, which formalizes the process by which GAs seek teaching appointments, allows another opportunity for assessment. The Director of Composition, the Director and Assistant Director of the Writing Center, and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies meet to discuss these applications, allowing us to assess the abilities of our Graduate Assistants. Similarly, English 5502, Mentored Composition Teaching provides assessment data via written observation reports from the Director of Composition. English 5025 (a one-credit, professional development course) culminates in a public reading, allowing creative writing faculty to assess the achievements of creative writing students. The GSC also assesses student achievement by encouraging and tracking presentations at Grad Expo and Grad Showcase, applications for Williams Travel Awards, nominations for Distinguished Graduate Student and Outstanding Thesis, and presentations at external conferences.

Also of note, in AY 2015-16, EGSO, in coordination with the GSC, completed a semester-long review of the graduate program from the graduate students’ perspective. This review included formal surveys and written responses from full- and part-time graduate students and also included data gathered from informal focus groups. EGSO presented its results to the GSC in Spring 2016, the result of which was a GSC-authored document (intended for first-year graduate students) concerning “best practices” for selecting a capstone committee and completing the capstone project.

**PART THREE**

Summarize changes and improvements in **curriculum, instruction, and learning** that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Assessment data gathered from the most recent assessment cycle (as well as the previous cycle) show a highly effective graduate program, successful in meeting its learning goals—the most important of which is preparing students for professional careers or, in the case of some graduate students who already have full-time employment, enhancing their professional development. While Part One of this report recorded specific data related to learning goals, inferences from the assessment data reveal other important successes. Three specific successes include: (1) both part- and full-time graduate students complete their degree in targeted time frames; (2) graduate students are well advised in the four available concentrations (and students who change from one concentration to another are not impeded); and (3) all graduate students participate in professional activity during their study. We single out these items since they offer another us another way to interpret our data and how the parts correlate. The data show a strong, rigorous curriculum in a graduate program with significant regional outreach, and show our graduate students are very successful in getting jobs in their chosen areas.

The GSC has also significantly developed the Certificate in the Teaching of Writing initiative (CTW). During the last cycle, the CTW (an 18-credit certificate) had just been approved by the IBHE, and was primarily intended to add to our successful Summer Writing Institute –an annual program sponsored by the National Writing Project that we offer through English 5585. While the CTW had some initial modest enrollment, assessment data showed it was not reaching its intended goal. Other information (primarily email inquiries to the Graduate Coordinator and anecdotal information from Summer Institute participants) revealed that, while interest was high for the CTW, high school teachers were not enrolling in the program due to time constraints. Based on this information, the GSC has completed plans—and received final approval—to begin offering the CTW entirely online. Early indications already show a marked increase in new graduate students enrolling in the CTW program, which, given the current high demand of dual credit training, we hope will increase. As of this report, we do not have assessment protocol for this online initiative, something the GSC will need to address soon.

Since the last report, we have offered ENG/CMN 5260 (Communication in Science and Technical Organizations, a course developed specifically for the MS in Sustainable Energy) every other year. Although most students in this course come from the Sustainable Energy concentration (in the School of Technology), increasing numbers of English and Communication Studies MA students are taking the course. Since the course is offered every other year, it is still too early to track or understand possible significances of this course to the professional writing concentration.

In the last report, plans were identified to help graduate students better prepare for professional conferences, plans that included encouraging instructors to include professional development items into their courses (if they weren’t already present). In addition, over the past three years, the GSC has sponsored an annual fall workshop on professional conferences, and almost all graduate courses now include some kind of professional activity. During this assessment cycle, graduate students have presented papers at over 15 professional conferences (most of these students received Williams Travel Award funding from the Graduate School). Students in the Creative Writing concentration also participate in formal and informal readings each semester and are actively involved in the publishing of *Bluestem*.

Data gathered from the AY2015-2017 rubrics revealed significant improvement in student ability to think critically and answer questions between the English 5000 symposium (at the end of their first semester) and the capstone oral defense. Although slightly improved, data from critical thinking and written communication skills (in thesis prospectus) are still low, suggesting that the genre of proposal writing is still something new to most students. The EGSO report (from AY 2015-16) revealed that graduate students needed (and wanted) more direct guidance in developing a capstone project. During the Spring semester of 2017, the GSC began discussing ways to address these concerns and we will likely develop a curricular change (for first-year students) to encourage earlier preparation for the capstone requirement.

Overall the successes and areas of concern that our assessment data has revealed will likely both come into play as the program addresses new challenges. Briefly, some of the challenges (and opportunities) that GSC will be addressing include: (1) enrollment (although lower in the past two years, new data shows a slight trend back up, which we hope to develop); (2) increasing our outreach to international students; (3) increasing online offerings; (4) revising our Mentored Teaching Program (a program for graduate assistants) to provide more teaching opportunities and to provide pedagogy for English Language Learners (ELL/ESL).