2013-2014 Assessment
Master of Arts

Contributors to this report: Michael Edson, Jennifer Schell, Daryl Farmer, James Ruppert

Program Outcomes for the MA in English are as follows:

1. Students should be able to situate literary texts in English within broad historical and cultural contexts, recognize appropriate literary conventions, and interpret particular texts by means of close reading.
2. Students should have a broad understanding of the philosophy of literary studies, be able to recognize different theoretical frameworks, and be able to apply one or more theoretical frameworks to particular texts.
3. Students should be able to write clearly and engagingly about literature, and be able to produce sustained, coherent arguments at an appropriate level of sophistication.
4. Students should complete their courses of study in a rigorous and timely manner.
5. Students who are going on to work or further study in the field of English should be adequately prepared for the next step in their professional lives.
6. Students should consider their graduate program at UAF to be of high quality.

Data

The committee reviewed 3 student portfolios and 4 exit questionnaires from students who graduated between Spring 2013 and Fall 2013. Two students were graduates of the MA program and two students were graduates of the MFA/MA program. (N.B. The Master of Arts program currently has eleven students pursuing an MA.) We have taken into account the fact that we have three MA students who completed their comprehensive exams, but who are not graduating on schedule for a two year program. While the committee is reviewing current graduates from the M.A. program, we will also extrapolate from last year’s review.

Discoveries

1. For the third year in a row, we held an annual "town meeting" for MA students and faculty to better communicate faculty expertise and interests and to learn what students would like added to the program.
2. Our MA students have taken advantage of opportunities to present their intellectual work at the Pacific Rim Conference on Literature and Rhetoric held each year in Anchorage in March.
3. We conclude that we are providing MAs with a very knowledgeable, accessible, and varied faculty. However, current and future faculty vacancies need to be filled to continue this strength.
4. Our students are writing cogent and insightful theses about wide ranging topics, from traditional studies such as Romanticism and Postmodernism to the emerging study of digital narratives.
5. We are graduating highly developed and publishable MAs with a consistent track record of publishing and continuing to teach in English and Literature.
6. Our students feel prepared to enter professional and academic life. Two of the graduates have or will be entering PhD programs.
Recommendations

1. We need to continue to provide access to professional development opportunities for MA students, and perhaps increase these opportunities. Since 2012, the Graduate School has funded graduate student travel to conferences or professional meetings; more of our students need to take advantage of this opportunity.

2. MA students should continue to be encouraged to attend the bi-monthly Humanities Colloquium; we should also consider developing a visiting scholar series similar to the visiting writers series if appropriate funding can be found.

3. MA students need clearer guidelines on what is expected for a MA thesis and to be encouraged to include current research. Perhaps a thesis guide could be developed.

4. MA students expressed some dissatisfaction with their TA training. The department continues to work on improving TA training and the TA mentoring program.

5. MA students express concern with the demanding degree requirements. In particular, they mention the timing of the comprehensive exam and the thesis. The department has begun discussing ways of redesigning the degree to enable them to complete their degree requirements in a timely fashion.

6. The committee again agrees with last year’s committee recommendations on suggested changes to the exit questionnaire in the following areas:

   1. a question about a course MA student would like to see added to the curriculum,
   2. a question about independent studies students took, and
   3. a question about 400 level courses students took while enrolled in the Program.