Department: English and Comparative Literature
Program: MA in English and Comparative Literature

College: Humanities and the Arts
Website: [http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/)

X Check here if your website addresses the University Learning Goals.

The link to PLO’s: [http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/learningoutcomes/index.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/learningoutcomes/index.html)

Program Accreditation (if any): Not applicable.

Contact Person and Email: Noelle Brada-Williams, MA Adviser/Graduate Coordinator and Associate Chair of English [Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu](mailto:Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu)

Date of Report: Summer, 2015

**Part A**

1. **List of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Mission Statement for The MA in English:**

Master of Arts in English Mission Statement

The written word grounds the Master of Arts in English and Comparative Literature. Its students learn to analyze literature and to write on literary topics at an advanced level. Students complete a rigorous program of courses that introduce them to cutting-edge research while training them to understand a range of theoretical and literary-historical frameworks for understanding literature. Before students earn a Master of Arts in English, they pass a two-part comprehensive exam. They also may choose to write a thesis. Students have the option to engage in graduate study in rhetoric and to train as college-level writing teachers. The program also offers students pathways to prepare for doctoral work.

MA in English Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.
5. Students will demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

These PLO’s were revised in 2012 by the Graduate Committee, a collection of eight faculty members who oversee issues relating to both the MA and MFA programs. PLO’s 1, 2, 3 & 4 are initially assessed in English 201 which acts as an introduction to the program and is our one required course for the MA. They are further assessed throughout each student’s coursework and PLO’s are listed on graduate course
syllabi. PLO’s 1, 3 & 4 are also assessed for all students before they can receive their MA through the two-part comprehensive exams which are usually taken near the end of a student’s time in the program. In addition to coursework, PLO #2 may also be assessed by a student’s thesis committee if a student decides to take the option of writing a thesis. Most students are assessed in PLO #5 through an exam administered by faculty in the World Language Department. We have also accepted evidence of native fluency through transcripts from non-English medium schools, testing by academics in other accredited universities (for languages not covered at SJSU), and though coursework completed within 5 years of a student’s advancement to candidacy.

2. Map of PLOs to University Learning Goals (ULGs)

The Department’s Graduate Committee, with the oversight of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee, discusses and consults with faculty to articulate alignment between PLOs and ULGs. The alignment is shown below:

PLO #1 (Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric) most closely aligns with the ULG’s of Specialized Knowledge, Intellectual Skills, and Applied Knowledge.

PLO #2 (Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.) most closely aligns with the ULG’s of Applied Knowledge and Broad Integrative Knowledge. However, the specific skills and methods of literary research would also fit the Specialized Knowledge ULG.

PLO #3 (Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.) fits the ULG of Intellectual Skills with additional applicability to the ULG’s of Specialized Knowledge, Broad Integrative Knowledge, and Applied Knowledge (depending on the path taken by each individual interpretation).

PLO #4 (Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints) is a perfect example of the ULG of acquiring Intellectual Skills.

PLO#5 (Students will demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.) fits the ULG Intellectual Skills as well as for Social and Global Responsibilities. Students have the option of going further with their foreign language acquisition to use it in comparative analyses. In such cases, the URL of Applied Knowledge would also apply.

Here it is organized by ULG:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialized Knowledge</th>
<th>PLO 1. Also, to a lesser extent, PLO 2 &amp; 3.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad Integrative Knowledge</td>
<td>PLO 2. Also PLO 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Skills</td>
<td>PLO 3, 4 &amp; 5. Also PLO 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Knowledge</td>
<td>PLO 2. Also PLO 1 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Global Responsibilities</td>
<td>PLO 5 and, depending on the focus of students’ research and interpretations, PLO’s 1, 2 &amp; 3 may also intersect with this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Alignment – Matrix of PLOs to Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table by PLO</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO 1 Knowledge of our Field</td>
<td>Every class beginning with 201. It is ultimately assessed with the comprehensive exams before anyone can graduate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 2 Research</td>
<td>Initially in 201 followed by all literature courses. Students also have the option to have additional assessment of this PLO by writing a thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 3 Critical Thinking</td>
<td>In every class with final assessment via the comprehensive exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 4 Writing</td>
<td>In every class with final assessment in the comprehensive exams. Students also have the option to write a thesis for additional assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 5 Foreign language</td>
<td>This PLO has the unusual status of being assessed outside the department by the SJSU World Languages department (via exams or coursework) or by faculty at other accredited institutions (via exams or coursework).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table by Course</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>201   Materials &amp; Methods</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202   Poetic Craft &amp; Theory</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203   Narr. Craft &amp; Theory</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204   Mod App to Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208   Comparative Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211   20th-Century Poetry</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215   Myth and Symbol</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216   Medieval Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224   Early Modern</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225   Shakespeare</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228   Genres</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230   18th-Century British</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232   Romanticism</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233   Victorian</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240   CW-Poetry*</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>241   CW-Fiction*</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242   CW-Non-Fiction*</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253   Periods in Am Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254   Genres in Am Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255   Themes in Am Lit</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256   20th-Century British</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257   History of Rhetoric</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>259   Composition Studies</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292   Beowulf</td>
<td>PLO’s 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>299   Miscellaneous language courses both at SJSU and other institutions</td>
<td>PLO 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* English 240, 241, and 242 are designed as MFA courses but may be take by MA’s as electives.

4. Planning – Assessment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLO 1 Knowledge of our Field</th>
<th>2013-2014. Via the comprehensive exams with additional input from the faculty of graduate coursework and thesis committees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO 2 Research</td>
<td>2014-2015 Via English 201 with additional input from the faculty of graduate coursework and thesis committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 3 Critical Thinking</td>
<td>2015-2016 Via the comprehensive exams with additional input from the faculty of graduate coursework and thesis committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 4 Writing</td>
<td>2016-2017 Via the comprehensive exams with additional input from faculty of graduate coursework and thesis committees. Since we moved to the option of having students write out their exams on computer in Spring 2014, it will be instructive to see the long-term effect of this change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO 5 Foreign language</td>
<td>2017-2018. Since this is only assessed once per student, we will use the accumulated data of previous years to assess the effectiveness of the current system (and minor changes recently made by English and the World Languages Department to the Foreign Language exam/assessment process in 2012-2013).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Student Experience

Program Learning Goals are placed on the graduate syllabi. Syllabus are also available on our department website.

Although we receive ongoing feedback from students in the program, we have also instituted an “exit interview” in which we solicit feedback from all of our graduating students so that we get the views of the most experienced students in the program once they have a chance to look back on their time in the program as a whole. The “exit interview” is a way of connecting with all graduating students and thus encourages feedback from those students who may be more reticent to share their criticism or praise of the program.

One issue that has been emphasized by student feedback is the lack of understanding of the goals of PLO 5 (foreign language acquisition) in the era of Google Translator. In my orientation sessions for new students and in office hours I now specifically emphasize the way that foreign language acquisition is not just about reading criticism in another language. It helps us to understand the unique structure of English (invaluable to teachers of writing) and opens up a window into the literature of other cultures in a way that no translation can access.

Part B

6. Graduation Rates for Total, Non URM and URM students

The three-year graduation rates provided by the IEA combine the MA and MFA. For our collective programs, of the 28 people who entered in 2011, 2 were URM, 17 were non-
URM, and 9 were listed as “other.” Unfortunately, the IEA lists no data for their three-year retention rate on the 2014-2015 report. In a separate report, the IEA lists the 3-year graduation rate as 50% for all 2011-entering grad students and further breaks that down to 43.5% for females, 80% for males.

ALL 28 students: 50%, 2 URM: 0% in 3 years, 17 non-URM: 58.8% (100% for all males and 100% for both male and female Asians, 36.4% for white women).

Since our MA and MFA program are taught at night and designed with part-time students in mind, 50% for 3-year graduation (a full-time achievement) seems quite healthy to us.

6. Headcounts of program majors and new students (per program and degree)
   This is what the IEA provided last year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester accepted</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Spring 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Spring 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEA Number Applied/Accepted/Enrolled</td>
<td>94/31/26</td>
<td>93/34/27</td>
<td>90/30/28</td>
<td>8/3/3</td>
<td>65/36/19</td>
<td>1/0/0</td>
<td>64/31/18</td>
<td>6/0/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that while the IEA data sometimes includes both the MFA and MA, only the MA admits people in the Spring (when Spring admission is permitted by the university). Admission numbers also include readmitted students who were previously in the program but for whom at least a year had elapsed since they were last in classes. These are not updated on the current IEA website.

From Department records: Fall MA 2014: 20 applied, 17 were accepted and 9 eventually attended.

Spring 2015 admissions were cut off unexpectedly in July 2014 due to the university’s enrollment management problems at the undergraduate level. One international student was allowed to apply and she was not accepted: 1/0/0. Fall 2015 records show that 27 applied and 18 were accepted but only 11 have reported that they plan to attend.

Department records for the MA show the following numbers for applications and acceptances:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester accepted</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Spring 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Spring 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications/Accepted</td>
<td>31/20</td>
<td>28/20</td>
<td>22/15</td>
<td>8/3</td>
<td>22/20</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>18/10</td>
<td>6/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. SFR and average section size (per program)
   In Fall 2014 IEA lists our graduate SFR at 11.8, which is identical to the college SFR. We offered 8 sections in the Fall and 6 in the Spring (IEA has not provided SFR for Spring 2015).

9. Percentage of tenured/tenure-track instructional faculty (per department)
   All faculty assigned to teach in the graduate programs of the English department are tenured or tenure-line faculty with the exception of the Connie R. Lurie Distinguished Visiting Author-in-Residence, a Spring semester endowed appointment. Thus, out of 14 graduate courses offered in the 2013-2014 year, including both MA and MFA listings, 13 or 93% were taught by tenured faculty.

Part C
10. Closing the Loop/Recommended Actions
Based on both IEA data of our retention and analysis of data on our students’ achievement of Program Learning Objective 2, we seem to be on the right track. As long as students stay with us, we are able to effectively train them. However, staying with us often means dealing with issues of financial aid, students’ own time constraints with family and work, or sometimes unreasonable self-conceptions of what they themselves are capable of in a given day. In orientation and advising of new applicants, we have tried to make a concerted effort to bring these larger issues to the fore when discussing the program and it seems to have worked for many. However, the high cost of living in this valley still has a negative impact on many of our students who must drop out before completing their programs. In addition, the often unreasonable public depictions of degrees attainable at the click of a mouse have given some applicants, especially international applicants, false ideas about the time and effort needed to go into a degree. Most of these conceptions are dealt with early in the admission process.

We are very proud of the researchers we have trained. The only change we would make is to better publicize our students’ level of achievement both here at SJSU and in their careers as alumni (see sections 12 and 13 on analysis and goals). These achievements may in turn convince more students to come to SJSU.

Additional actions we want to make are to review the comprehensive exams which help us to access PLO’s 1, 3, & 4 as well as to do more research into our student’s work in satisfying their foreign language requirement (PLO 5).

A lower number of applicants to our department’s masters-level programs since 2008 and increased pressure to cancel classes which do not have at least 15 students have put a huge pressure on our graduate programs and have endangered 201 in particular, the one required course for the MA and the one which is most effective in training our students in research (PLO 2). See section 13.

11. Assessment Data
PLO – 2 is addressed in Professor Adrienne Eastwood’s English 201 (the one required course for all MA students), by having students develop an original idea about one of two literary texts (either Hamlet or Dracula) and then to conduct extensive research so that their final paper should put their work in conversation with the body of work already conducted on that topic. Dr. Eastwood’s syllabus (attached) explains the assignments that comprise the research component. These include finding and presenting on an example of a critical essay in the field. Later, after extensive research on their subject, students write a prospectus and an annotated bibliography. This project culminates in a seminar paper based on their research as well as a conference-style presentation of their findings. This takes students through the many stages of research in the humanities, as well as shows them how research is presented in our discipline through their active participation in the process.

Of the 15 students in the course, 9 scored 90% or higher on the final essay, thus demonstrating EXCELLENT competence in conducting research and synthesizing other peoples’ research into their own argument. 5 students scored in the 80%-89% range, indicating SATISFACTORY achievement in research. One student did not complete the assignment, and therefore was ranked UNSATISFACTORY in this area.

12. Analysis
In terms of PLO #2 (Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research), we feel the program is in a good shape. Students who
complete our courses show a great deal of success as seen by both our assessment of our students in 201 and by the achievements of our graduates. In addition to the assessment done of our incoming Fall 2014 students by Professor Eastwood in 201 (see below), one of our graduating students received the thesis of the year award for 2014, Danielle Crawford, and one of the two graduate students celebrated on the University Commencement platform this past May, 2015, was a graduate student in Persian Studies who was mentored by one of our English faculty, Dr. Persis Karim. Thus our department has had a hand in training half of the graduate students deemed the best researchers in the entire university during the 2014-2015 period. So in addition to the statistical and quantitative evidence provided by Dr. Eastwood via her Fall 201 course, we also have a good deal of anecdotal evidence that our program and faculty are offering strong training in research skills. We also have a half dozen alumni currently working on doctoral theses. One of our 2015 thesis writers, Gayathri Goel, has been accepted to a PhD program at Tufts for Fall 2015.

13. Proposed changes and goals
We are very pleased with the level of training our MA students receive in terms of research (PLO 2). We should promote the various achievements of our student researchers more both on social media and in print forums.

We are still reviewing the content and form of the MA comprehensive exams to ensure that one of our main organs of assessment for PLO’s 1, 3 & 4 is continually fine-tuned and updated to meet the needs of our program and changes in our field.

The most vital goal we have for the MA program is to increase enrollment. We produced a new pamphlet about the program near the end of the Fall admissions season last Spring and hope that it can bear more fruit for Fall 2016 admissions. Unfortunately, Spring enrollments, when the MA traditionally gets a third of its student body, were once again cut for Spring 2016. Since the announcement was in the summer, much of the advising and contact with potential Spring 2016 applicants had already happened in the spring and is now invalid/false. Our university, program, and advisors sound unreliable and unprofessional when major decisions such as whether or not a program will be open to California applicants for the Spring are made in the middle of summer. Applications for both the MA and MFA have been down by as much as half (50%) since 2007, the last cycle since severe budget cuts hit the CSU system and student fees went up. We have yet to turn this trend around. We have hopes that continued effort to promote the department and its program will increase interest in our program but ultimately, issues such as enrollment management at the university level need to be fixed before our graduate programs can be stabilized. In addition to downward pressure on enrollments (such as higher fees and late cancellation of Spring applications for state residents), we have the additional pressure exerted by our college to raise all grad classes to 15 students or cancel them (grad classes traditionally had a maximum of 15 but now cap at 16), including our one required course for the MA, 201. If we cannot yield 15 enrolled students a year from new applicants, this becomes a major issue. If we can’t offer English 201, the one required course, to every incoming class on a yearly basis, we cannot continue our MA program (which means we cannot have graduate-level Teaching Associates teaching Freshman composition or Graduate Assistants helping in large undergraduate classes; indeed, we would fail to exist in our current category of a masters-level granting comprehensive university). Ultimately, we seem to have hit the level of minimum funding needed to support graduate programs and we all need to keep the very important and valuable resource for both our university and the citizens of California in mind as we move forward with future enrollment and funding decisions.