

January 17th, 2017

Department of Comparative Literature

Proposal on Departmental Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The Faculty of the Department of Comparative Literature met on January 13th, 2017, and approved of the following proposal.

Comparative Literature Courses at all levels, graduate and undergraduate, include an essay requirement. While mid-term and final exams are also administered, the essay is the principal medium for gauging a student's relative mastery of not only of the materials covered but also the idioms of our field (close reading of literary and visual texts, theoretical framing, etc). The essay also represents an opportunity for a student truly to excel—to demonstrate sustained engagement, originality and a readiness to read and analyze probingly.

As a means of assessing whether or not and to what degree stated learning outcomes have been met, we propose to develop dossiers of essays. Samples will be collected from a sampling of courses at each level within the undergraduate curriculum, e. g., 101, 102; 212, 231; 301, 360; 450, 461. Examples included in these portfolios will range across the grading spectrum. In other words, essays judged poor or failing will be included alongside those deemed average, good and outstanding. The samples kept in the portfolio will include instructor comments indicating in what ways the essay has succeeded (or not succeeded) in satisfying the criteria of the assignment. The assignment itself will also be excluded. The names of students will be redacted from their essays in the interest of privacy.

At least one faculty meeting during the academic year, faculty will discuss this process and compare notes. Likewise, our Director of Pedagogy will confer with those of our Graduate Employees who serve as instructors of record.