Humanities Department

A. Department Evaluation Report

1. What was the department’s major assessment accomplishment this year?

All culminating experience courses were reviewed to ensure measurement tools are properly assessing program goals. Also, assessment strategies and program goals for English, Communications, and EAP were all reevaluated and revised by faculty during the June assessment workshop. Communications faculty created additional course assessment rubrics to ensure program outcomes are met.

2. How did this accomplishment impact the department assessment goals?

The assessment workshop helped the department make significant progress; all departmental programs now have revised and appropriate assessment goals and measures. Humanities faculty are now making steady progress and all appear to understand the need for and purpose of creating clear program outcome goals and for creating an assessment program to measure success.

3. How did this accomplishment impact the course assessment goals?

Each Humanities program now has clear assessment goals established by full time faculty. That was not the case earlier in the academic year.

4. How was this accomplishment related to last year’s assessment?

The department is now using tools to assess progress earlier in the students’ academic careers. In previous years students were only assessed during their culminating experience course, primarily via the Major Field Test or departmentally created test.

5. How will this accomplishment relate to next year’s assessment?

The department may now move forward by implementing the new assessment tools and collecting relevant information. This feedback may then be used to determine program strengths and weaknesses, which college venues are meeting outcome goals more effectively, and will ultimately result in program modifications where appropriate.

6. Reflecting upon your accomplishments, how would you improve the assessment process?

The Assessment Office must work to regularly remind full time faculty of the importance and relevance of meaningful assessment. Faculty understand course-level assessment because we methodically assess learning in each course. However, faculty need to understand how this course-level assessment may be used to improve program-level assessment.
7. **What is working well and should not change?**

   The pretest/posttest used by Communications, the MFT used by English, and the original theses required in all culminating experience courses. These are effective measures but are insufficient when used alone.

8. **What was the Department’s major assessment hurdle this year?**

   Lack of clear understanding of the importance of meaningful assessment. Also, few full time faculty really understood that assessment throughout an academic program was important.

9. **How did this hurdle impact the department’s assessment goals?**

   Relatively little was accomplished prior to the workshop.

10. **How did this hurdle impact the course assessment goals?**

    Relatively little was accomplished prior to the workshop.

11. **How was this hurdle related to last year’s assessment?**

    The department’s assessment measures were not significantly changed.

12. **How will this hurdle be addressed in next year’s assessment?**

    The department now has clear outcome goals and more meaningful tools for measuring those goals.

13. **Reflecting upon the hurdles you faced, how would you improve your assessment process?**

    Make assessment a regular item on department meeting agendas.

14. **What would you change to provide the most impact on assessment in your department? Explain and be as specific as possible.**

    See answer to #13.
### B. Department MFT Results

**DEPARTMENTAL SUMMARY OF TOTAL TEST AND SUBSCORES**

Test: Literature in English  
Form Code: 4HMF  
Institution: Columbia College (MO)  
Cohort: OC Literature in English In Seat Students 13/14AY  
Closed on: August 12, 2014

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Students responding to less than 50% of the questions: 0
Students in frequency distribution: 5
Students tested: 5
C. Literature in English MFT Analysis

1. Please provide us with a summary of your 2013/14 MFT data.

Only five in-seat students took the MFT at the end of the 2013 Academic Year. Overall, these students scored 1.8% below the national mean. Scores along every indicator roughly parallel the mean scores, although the five students scored particularly low in “British and American Literature 1901-1945” and “Literary History” (roughly 14% below the mean) and particularly high in “American Literature to 1900” (roughly 11% above the mean). The highest and lowest scores on the MFT belonged to students on the Literature Track of the English program, although the student with the lowest score did take almost all of her English courses in the Evening Program. Of the other three students who scored in the middle, two were on the Creative Writing track and one on the Literature Track.

2. How does the 2013/14 MFT data compare to MFT data from previous years? Explain.

It’s extremely difficult to determine trends based on data with such low n-numbers. Based on data from the past five years, it can generally be stated that the average of student performance on the English MFT is below the national mean but within the standard deviation. This means that the 2013/14 MFT data is comparable to recent years. Previous MFT analyses have suggested that students on the Creative Writing track have performed worse on the MFT than students on the Literature track. Although the highest performing student in the 2013/14 cohort was on the Literature track, the data does not bear out this apparent trend of Creative Writing students performing worse. Again, because n-numbers are so low, we are not comfortable drawing conclusions that students on the Creative Writing track are now performing at parity with students on the Literature track.

3. What does this MFT data tell you about student learning in your program? What can be done at the course level to improve student learning based on this data?

Students would benefit from taking survey courses and from emphasis on literary history in their electives. The MFT does seem to emphasize Anglo-American literary modernism (occurring the period 1901-1945, and so if we want students to perform more successfully along that indicator, then we need to emphasize modernism in our course offerings and syllabuses, where relevant. English will also have a discussion about whether to expand our literature surveys to three parts, thereby allowing more coverage of the modernist period.

4. Did anything about the 2013/14 MFT results surprise you? If so, what was surprising about them? Please be as specific as possible.

Not especially. The lowest-scoring student took almost all of her courses on the Evening Campus, not in the Day Program; this is not surprising. Of the other four students, we would have expected at least one of them to perform better, and one high-achieving student performed
especially well, as expected. This student transferred into the College and program as a Junior and took all of his core and elective classes in four semesters. For that student, at least, the English program on the literature track allowed him to perform well along every indicator of the test.

5. **What changes have you made in the past as a result of MFT data? Did these changes appear to have an effect on the 2013/14 MFT data?**

Several years ago we began requiring that all students on the literature track take four surveys (British Literature I and II, and American Literature I and II) in order to help ensure that our majors on that track have a firm foundation in literary history. We also made ENGL 351 (Shakespeare) and 431 (Senior Seminar) core requirements, and we required that ENGL 490 (Literary Theory and Criticism) be taken prior to Senior Seminar—so that students have a foundation in Literary Theory before writing Senior Seminar essays and taking the MFT. All of these changes have been designed to address weaknesses suggested by MFT data and weaknesses observed in student’s performances in Senior Seminar.

6. **What curricular or programmatic changes would you suggest exploring/making based on the 2013/14 MFT data?**

English has already made changes with these data in mind. For example, we have eliminated some courses (such as ENGL 123: Mythology, ENGL 331: Ethics in Literature, and ENGL 397: Science Fiction and Fantasy, that do not contribute meaningfully to students’ knowledge of literary history. Doing this will help to make sure that students take more substantive upper-division electives.

We have added a “gateway” course, ENGL 220: Writing About Literature, that aims to provide students with a firm foundation in literary study, which includes literary history. In addition, we have made a 200-level lit class as a prerequisite for 300-levels classes to help strengthen basic literary study skills before students move on to advanced classes.

We have recently revised almost all of our upper and lower division master syllabuses to require greater rigor; for instance, on all of our upper-division elective syllabuses we have included this language: “Because this course represents an upper-level English elective, it bears a distinctive responsibility for teaching advanced knowledge within the discipline. Students must read and write intensively, and they must engage in serious literary study that includes the use of peer-reviewed scholarship. This course must require advanced students to complete both in class and out of class projects (such as midterms, finals, group reports, quizzes, research papers). The course reading load should be at least 1000 pages, and may comprise less than this minimum only if the instructor is accounting for a significant amount of assigned poetry.”

We have yet to see if these changes, and the numerous others we’ve made, will make a difference. It’s important that these changes be implemented across all other venues: Evening, Online, and AHE campuses.
One curricular change that we might explore based on MFT data would be requiring 200-level survey courses on our Creative Writing track. We will also discuss making the survey courses three parts each.