

Department of English
Illinois State University

Goals of the Undergraduate Major in English
Additional Goals for the Teacher Certification Sequence
Goals of the Master's in English
Goals of the Master's in Writing
Goals of the Ph.D. in English Studies

Assessment Plans for All Programs

Goals of the Undergraduate Major in English

Abilities:

1. The ability to read a familiar or an unfamiliar text in any of several genres (including not only traditional belletristic forms such as poetry, fiction, and drama but also such non-fiction forms as the essay, the autobiography, the personal letter, etc.), and from any of several cultural or historical origins in such a way that the act of reading incorporates literal comprehension, aesthetic responsiveness, informed awareness of the traditions and contexts) within which the text may be most productively read, rhetorical and logical analysis of its argument, and critical reflection on the implications of its origins, tradition, aesthetics, rhetoric, and argument.
2. The ability to write about various kinds of texts in such a way that one's own writing articulates and embodies the multiple dimensions of the complex act of reading described above (that is, literal comprehension, aesthetic responsiveness, awareness of tradition and appropriate context, rhetorical and logical analysis, and critical reflection) in clear, accurate, and effective prose.
3. The ability to use reading and writing (as described in #1 and #2 above) as a means of enabling the reading and study of other kinds of texts and situations and of producing other kinds of writing--that is, as a means of understanding and writing about a wide variety of other kinds of topics, problems, and issues (e.g., personal experiences, topics in academic courses outside English, social issues, films and other kinds of media, administrative problems within an institution or business, political campaigns, and a host of other topics and situations) which demand skills in critical reading/observation and effective writing in appropriate forms.
4. The ability to articulate a critically informed, carefully reasoned position about the social and philosophical value of the various components of English as a field of study.
5. The ability to find (in a textbook, library, or elsewhere) the kinds of information that are relevant to the problem or issue being addressed in the writing situations described in #2, #3, and #4 above and to integrate that information into one's own written work in a manner that both supports one's own rhetoric and argument and does justice to the source of the information.

Knowledge:

1. Useable familiarity¹ with a wide variety of works in various forms by British writers of various periods.
2. Useable familiarity with a wide variety of works in various forms by American writers of various periods.

3. Useable familiarity with a wide variety of works in various forms by writers from outside the British and American literary traditions.
4. Useable familiarity with the history and grammatical structure of the English language and with linguistic theory in general.
5. Useable familiarity with the history of rhetoric and with modern and contemporary theories of rhetoric.
6. Useable familiarity with analytical techniques, bodies of information, and theory drawn from work in other academic disciplines.
7. Useable familiarity with a wide variety of works in various forms by members of American minority groups.
8. Useable familiarity with such linguistic concepts as "correct" usage, usage levels, and the dialects that make up American English--and of the social and cultural implications of the differences in language use that such concepts point to.
9. Useable familiarity with such rhetorical concepts as rhetorical situation, rhetorical appeals, theories of invention, audience and forum analysis, and elements of style and argumentation.
10. Useable familiarity with such backgrounds to English and American literature as the Bible, mythology, and folklore.

Attitudes:

1. Belief in the personal and social importance of reading as a complex and culturally significant act.
2. Belief in the personal and social importance of performing well in a variety of writing situations.
3. Belief in the centrality of language to human endeavor in all areas and therefore in the usefulness of English as a means to achieving valuable personal and social abilities.
4. Belief in the importance of aesthetic responsiveness to language as it is used in a variety of expressive and communicative situations.
5. Belief in the importance of analysis and critical reflection as language-based activities--that is, activities both required and enabled by language.
6. Belief in the interdependence of all the dimensions of language activity--reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking.

Additional Goals for the Teacher Certification Sequence in English at ISU

Abilities:

1. The ability to read student writing in such a way that the reading process incorporates a sympathetic awareness of the complexities of the writing process as that process is manifested in students' work, recognition of the features of good written discourse (such as substantial and relevant content, clear and effective organization, specific sense of audience, verbal and conceptual clarity, appropriateness of tone, and accuracy in mechanics and usage) as they do or do not appear in the students' work, and a detailed analytical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students' work.
2. The ability to prepare comments on student writing that articulate and embody the complex act of reading described above and that communicate effectively to the students.

Knowledge:

1. Useable familiarity with the formal characteristics of the major belletristic and non-fiction genres as they have developed over time.
2. Useable familiarity with at least two systems for describing and analyzing the grammar of the English language.
3. Useable familiarity with a body of literature judged to be suitable for adolescents.
4. Useable familiarity with the instructional materials and curricular patterns commonly used in secondary English programs and with the role of English in the total school program.
5. Useable familiarity with ways of teaching English in the secondary schools--ways, that is, of selecting and adapting methods and materials for the various interests and maturity levels of the students, of developing a sequence of assignments, and of guiding and stimulating the students' intellectual and social growth through language.
6. Useable familiarity with the history of high school English teaching in the United States and with the issues in our nation's history that have influenced various pedagogical models.

¹The phrase, "useable familiarity," which appears in each of the items in the two "knowledge" sections is understood to mean: 1) accurate memory of a number of features of the text(s) and/or bodies of information, and 2) the ability to use one's accumulated knowledge as a means of beginning a process of reasoning that results in the effective use of information as a dimension of critical reflection, analysis, rhetoric, and argument.

Goals of the Master's in English

The Master's in English has four options, each of which has a set of goals tailored to its particular set of interests and concerns. These include a literature option, a creative writing option, a children's literature option, and a special studies option.

1. Literature option:
 - a. to study diverse literatures;
 - b. to write analytically with scholarly, critical, and theoretical currency;
 - c. to read difficult literary texts with tact and skill;
 - d. to apply theory to the study of literature;
 - e. to increase awareness of and appreciation for the variety of voices used in literature;
 - f. to develop an understanding of the history of various literary epochs.
2. Creative writing option:
 - a. to understand several critical theories about literature;
 - b. to understand achievements by established writers in a selected genre;
 - c. to write a creative thesis demonstrating high merit, with a critical preface/afterward;
 - d. to develop advanced knowledge of great writers.
3. Children's literature option:
 - a. to understand the historical and theoretical foundation of the language;
 - b. to master recent research in teaching language arts;
 - c. to become knowledgeable of the historical and contemporary books in children's literature;
 - d. to understand the principles of book selection.
4. Special studies option:
 - a. to address pragmatic teaching needs;
 - b. to integrate cognate field courses into a cohesive knowledge base.

Goals of the Master's in Writing

The Master's in Writing includes four sequences, so the list of goals below is subdivided into common objectives and objectives pertaining to four sequences within the degree.

1. Common Objectives

Students in the program will:

- a. Achieve a thorough grasp of recent research in: 1) Composition, 2) Rhetorical Theory, 3) Linguistics, 4) The Relationship between Reading and Writing
- b. Achieve an advanced proficiency in producing written discourse.

2. Objectives of Various Sequences

Students in the Secondary Teaching sequence will:

- a. Master the pragmatic and theoretical bases for teaching composition;
- b. Be able to analyze in detail the strengths and weaknesses of student writing and to communicate the analysis effectively;
- c. Understand some basic principles of learning theory, especially as they apply to reading and writing;
- d. Through the supervised experience in tutoring students in the University Writing Center or as a supervised teaching intern, acquire a basic knowledge of ways to teach writing, to select and adapt methods and materials for the varying interests and maturity levels of students, and to develop a sequence of assignments to guide and stimulate students in their study of writing.

Students in the Community College Teaching sequences will:

- a. Master the pragmatic and theoretical bases for teaching composition;
- b. Master the pragmatic and theoretical bases for teaching composition to students who lack entry-level college writing skills;
- c. Be able to analyze in detail the strengths and weaknesses of student writing and to communicate the analysis effectively;
- d. Understand some basic principles of learning theory, especially as they apply to reading and writing;
- e. Understand the social structure of the community college;
- f. Through teaching, as an intern and under supervision, usually in a community college, acquire a basic knowledge of ways to teach writing, to select and adapt methods and materials for the varying interests and maturity levels of students, and to develop a sequence of assignments to guide and stimulate students in their study of writing.

Students in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) sequence will:

- a. Master the pragmatic and theoretical bases for teaching composition to non-native speakers;
- b. Be able to analyze in detail the strengths and weaknesses of student writing and to communicate the analysis effectively;
- c. Understand how language functions (i.e., will understand levels of usage, dialectology, and the cultural implications of each);
- d. Know the history of the English language and at least two of its grammars;

- e. Be able to apply the knowledge of language to the teaching of English as a Second Language;
- f. Through assisting a professional teacher of English as a Second Language or teaching under that professional's supervision, acquire a basic knowledge of ways to teach English to non-native speakers, to select and adapt materials for the varying interests, maturity levels, and relative language skills of non-native speakers, and to develop a sequence of assignments to guide and stimulate non-native speakers in their study of English.

Students in the Professional Writing sequence, Technical Writing Emphasis, will:

- a. Master the knowledge of style appropriate to the aims of a particular discourse;
- b. Achieve proficiency in producing written discourse that is professional in quality;
- c. Through a professionally supervised work experience, become aware of the relationships between the theory and practice of writing developed in the classroom and the communications and decision-making skills required by the business and professional world.

Students in the Professional Writing sequence, Creative Writing Emphasis, will:

- a. Master the knowledge of style appropriate to the aims of a particular discourse;
- b. Achieve proficiency in producing written discourse that is professional in quality;
- c. In a supervised writing practicum, apply the skills and knowledge developed in the classroom toward the completion of a major writing project or an individual writing portfolio.

Goals of the Ph.D. in English Studies

The Ph.D. in English Studies is designed for students who have a demonstrated career commitment to teaching, especially in two- and four-year colleges. Its purpose is to integrate theories of undergraduate instruction with knowledge in composition, language, and literature. Students in this program must successfully complete courses and/or seminars in education, i.e., a professional education component, as well as courses in the major and minor disciplines. The professional education component, including an internship, is designed to familiarize students with basic pedagogical concepts in higher education. The disciplinary component is designed to expose Ph.D. students to a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills that will enhance teaching in English.

The objectives of the Ph.D. in English Studies are:

1. to educate students in the theoretical and practical applications of research in pedagogy, language, composition, and literature;
2. to prepare students for leadership in the profession through scholarly activity, and
3. to prepare students to teach reading and writing to undergraduate students to improve their verbal and analytical skills.

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