

Review of the MFA Results and Report on Curricular Change
MA English
Spring 2006

Reviewing results of student comments on the SLU Exit Survey, we find our MA students well satisfied with the quality of their teachers overall, particularly the individual care and attention their teachers give. In the last Exit Survey (2004-2005), 100% of MAs judged themselves “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the effectiveness of the faculty as teachers and 83.3% “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the interest shown by faculty in the student’s academic development. In preparation for advanced courses, 75% judged themselves “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied,” and 91.6% were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the quality of instruction in advanced courses. The Exit Survey also indicates that 91.7% of our MAs are “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the overall quality of their degree program.

Further providing assessment of our MAs’ competency in language, literature, scholarly research, and criticism, the English Department maintains the policy that all English MAs must pass at least 15 hours on the 600 level, with a total of 36 hours, all of which integrate graded written work and/or a written project involving research. They must pass two required classes: a writing-intensive class and a theory/methods class. They must pass Part 1 of the MA Comprehensive Exam, consisting of an essay written for a graduate class and revised to a publishable level, and Parts 2 and 3 of the MA Comprehensive Exam, consisting of two timed (2 hour) essays. Part 2 requires a 2-hour timed essay on a synthetic question drawing on texts students read in courses from three broad time periods: ancient, medieval, and early modern literatures; 18th- and 19th century literatures; and 20th- and 21st-century literatures. Part 3 requires a 2-hour timed essay in response to a question drawn from a set primary text and a list of secondary readings in one of three areas: literary studies, professional writing, or language and literacy.

To help our MAs to gain practical experience in their chosen area prior to entering their professions, we encourage selected students to participate in Internship programs in professional writing (placement in an intern position in business or industry) and language and literacy (a mentor-apprentice teacher training program). In addition, selected students can participate in Graduate Assistantships that provide professional experience in tutoring, journal production, oversight of computer labs, administration, and scholarly research.

To improve our English MAs’ global awareness and multicultural knowledge, the English Department continues to expand current teaching in global issues in our classes and add to the many courses specified in our Assessment Plan focusing on literature and culture from a global perspective. Meanwhile, faculty members encourage students to take advantage of the several Study Abroad programs offered by SLU which will provide valuable real-life encounters with the places and people inspiring our literary studies to add to research and classroom experience.

One possible area for improvement, according to student ratings in the Exit Survey, is the availability of library resources relating to the major. In this area, 41.7% gave a rating of “Dissatisfied,” indicating that our department should more actively pursue library purchases appropriate to our majors.