

## Form E-1-A for Boston College Departments/Programs

### Department/Program Literature Core Program, AY 2021, English Department

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

Here are the learning outcomes that were fine-tuned by a Literature Core Committee in 2012 (following a self-study):

**By the successful completion of their Literature Core course, students will be able to demonstrate:**

- an ability to close-read, interpret, and analyze texts;
- an ability to write clear, coherent, organized, grammatically correct and stylistically competent prose;
- an awareness of literary genres and terminology;
- a recognition of the historical and cultural specificity of literary texts; and
- an appreciation of the human imagination.

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your dept major handouts?)

Faculty are instructed to include these learning outcomes on every Lit Core syllabus; additionally, this information is found on our departmental website:

[https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/about/learning-outcomes.html#literature\\_core](https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/about/learning-outcomes.html#literature_core)

The information is also distributed to all advisors and first-year students through the Academic Advising Center programs and materials.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

The Literature Core Canvas site holds all guidelines and philosophies, as well as the formal learning outcomes created by the Department and approved by the EPC. This website is a deep resource of pedagogical materials and program practices. It is added to and kept up-to-date by the current director and graduate assistant.

The Literature Core Program is guided by the Literature Core Director who joins two other appointed faculty members on the Literature Core Steering Committee. The Lit Core Steering discusses program directions and new initiatives, and looks over syllabi, assignments and outcomes.

AY 2021: Eileen Donovan-Kranz served as Literature Core Director in Fall 2020. Due to Eileen Donovan-Kranz's Spring 2021 medical leave, the two members of the Lit Core Steering Committee, Christina Klein and Andrew Sofer, took over in her absence, with Christina Klein performing as Acting Director and Andrew Sofer assisting with mentorship of PhD students teaching the Literature Core, as well as with pedagogy labs for faculty.

Tina ran two Lit Core pedagogy labs in the spring semester:

- March 19, 4 - 5:30. Topic: "Using Teaching Technologies Effectively." Presenter: Lori Harrison-Kahan
- April 28, 2021. Topic: "What did we learn this semester/year? What do we want to take forward into next year?" Presenters: Teddy Lehre, Deanna Danforth, Rebekah Mitsein, Dayton Haskin

Due to the nature of the ongoing pandemic, the stressors on students and faculty, and the changeover of directors, original plans for further assessments have been postponed. The outgoing director, Eileen Donovan-Kranz, recommends that in the next academic year we might gather two types of academic writing from all of our Lit Core faculty in the fall semester: one formal essay and one informal piece of writing (Canvas discussion response or creative response) at the end of the Fall 2021 semester, from a randomized sample of students. Practices established by the Core Committee, and used for Enduring Questions courses, influence this model.

In the Spring 2022 semester, the three member Lit Core Steering Committee could then evaluate ways that the samples do or do not fulfill the stated learning outcomes.

Notably, one valuable resource that year after year (beginning in 1993) provides insight into our Core programs in English is the website Fresh Ink: Essays from BC's First-Year Writers, <http://www.bcfreshink.com/current-issue/>

Because Fresh Ink is produced as a result of call for papers from students enrolled in all Core English programs, it therefore reflects those programs: Lit Core, FWS, ELL, Complex Problems, Enduring Questions. Additionally, Fresh Ink is also put to use in those programs as an assigned text, offering examples of writing approaches and/or providing texts for class discussion. It is a researcher's dream: it provides a yearly and longitudinal look at first-year writing across courses and academic genres in English. Many publishers and other universities draw from this resource as well.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

Christina Klein and Andrew Sofer, as well as Eileen Donovan-Kranz.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?

Faculty and student support have been the major emphasis of this year for the Literature Core rather than assessment. The ongoing constraints of the pandemic have led to creativity in the face of many limitations. Discussions and strategizing have been both formal and informal in AY2021.

Triage remains a need in this pandemic. For Lit Core, the component parts of that triage in AY2021 have been: technology aids, faculty support, increased support and meetings for PhD students, the discussion

of classroom strategies amid remote teaching and/or amid in-class pandemic protocols, attention to student burnout and mental health challenges. Additionally, the March 2021 visit (Zoom) from writer/director/BC alumnus Lulu Wang provided a welcome inspirational and celebratory event for the program.

**6) Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

The latest departmental self-study was completed in 2012, with major changes to the course offerings. Guidelines and goals were streamlined, learning outcomes revamped, and the four “branches” of Lit Core offerings were eradicated in favor of one unified mission. Each Literature Core course now offers students a different subcategory, or theme, but the learning outcomes remain consistent across sections, as do a variety of disciplinary requirements, as stated in our guidelines.