

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

Department/Program Classical Studies

- 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?)

Classics majors are expected to exhibit mastery in 3 broad areas:

1. Linguistic knowledge and skills: Students will possess advanced proficiency in at least one ancient language (Greek or Latin) and, preferably, intermediate proficiency in the other.
2. Critical and interpretative skills: Students will be able to write critical or interpretative papers and compose interpretative arguments that pursue a thesis and engage with both primary and secondary materials.
3. Knowledge of the ancient world: Students will exhibit competence in at least two major content areas: a) techniques of literary analysis; b) techniques of artistic analysis; c) the broad outlines of ancient political history, Greek or Roman; d) special problems in ancient social and/or cultural history, e.g. law, religion, philosophy, economy, gender studies.

- 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?)

These objectives are published on the Classics Dept. website (http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/classics/Undergraduate_program.html).

- 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?)

We collect samples of written work (i.e. exams and/or papers) completed by majors in classes pertaining to the language, literature, art, or culture of ancient Greece and Rome over the course of their undergraduate careers. Graduating seniors fill out an exit questionnaire that asks them to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their Classics major and how well they feel it prepared them for their post-graduation plans.

- 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?)

The Director of Undergraduate Studies and at least two other members of the department evaluate and interpret the data at the end of each academic year. They report their findings as well as suggest changes to curriculum, if appropriate, to the chair of the department.

5) **What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence?** (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)

As with last year, the pandemic and the changes it brought (most temporary, some permanent) have made assessing our curriculum's effectiveness more complex than usual, so these comments rely heavily on my observations from working with our 2021 graduating seniors in multiple courses and from conversations among department colleagues that we could hold via Zoom. Academic year 2020–2021 was unusual in other ways, as we had only one graduating senior. He came in with little Classics background and weak languages, but by the end of his time with us he was able to read at the advanced level with facility and demonstrated substantially sharper reading, writing, and research skills. While our graduating classes generally tend to be on the small side, we anticipate returning to our usual numbers in the coming few years (of the 25 students currently declared as majors, 5 will be seniors next year, 7 will be juniors, and 6 will be sophomores; another 7 entering first-years are declared, though that number will likely fluctuate as time goes on).

Our chief concerns, as always, are to help students get a rounded education in the ancient world (both language(s) and culture) and to find ways to expand our reach more widely. Our Ancient Civilization minor continues to flourish: we graduated 6 minors in 2020, 7 in 2021, and are set to have 12 graduate in 2022, with an added 14 in the pipeline for 2023. This growing visibility and demand for an undergraduate Classical curriculum that gives students the flexibility to study broadly and that makes room for students who come from backgrounds that have traditionally not allowed them to study ancient languages has led us to more serious discussions about developing a path through the major that would mirror aspects of the minor but offer greater depth, structure, and rigor. The department has met several times to discuss these possibilities and is currently brainstorming and research various models at peer institutions. We see this as a real growth area for the department, especially with the addition of a 6th full-time faculty member in Prof. Sapsford, and anticipate developing a proposal for this new major (or major track) over the course of the coming academic year.

Our language courses continue to be successful, though we are still working through a number of hurdles (institutional, structural, and curricular) that have made their enrollments lower than we would prefer. Two years ago we added minors in Latin and ancient Greek, with the aim of enticing strong language students to continue with coursework at the advanced level without the commitment of a full major. We have 5 declared Latin minors — the same as last year — and expect those numbers will continue to rise slowly as we advertise this new option and students spread word of it. As with last year, the current 5 are divided between students for whom the Latin minor offers justification for continuing on into advanced coursework and those for whom it provides an off-ramp from a full Classics major. As a result, it may be a wash for us in terms of enrollments, but it is a gain for the students in terms of flexibility, and it has allowed students who are uncertain of whether they can complete a Classics major a low-risk, high-reward way to continue working towards the goal of some concrete formal certification of their Classics studies. The ancient Greek minor does not currently have any registered students, though we knew from the start that this would require a longer lead-time to become established and anticipate slow but meaningful growth over time.

We also launched in Spring 2019 an after-school Latin program called Aequora at Nativity Prep Middle School in Jamaica Plain. This program, started by the Paideia Institute, uses a fun, games-based, literacy-focused curriculum to teach Latin and Roman culture, especially to under-served minority populations. Our goals for our own students were 1) to provide teaching experience for advanced students considering teaching careers, and 2) to offer students in our lower-level Latin classes an exciting way to engage with and take ownership of their Latin learning. The initial pilot worked as we intended: the senior

Classics major who coordinated the program described it as “life-changing,” and we developed a dedicated, high-morale cadre of younger advanced- and intermediate-level student volunteers, all of whom are planning to continue with the program and as Classics majors or minors. At its current scale the program can accommodate only a small fraction of our Latin students, so its impact on retention and enrollments will be limited, but even a fairly modest increase in retention and morale in our language courses could make a big difference. Unfortunately, the COVID crisis terminated the program midway through Spring 2020, and it has remained on hold through the present as we slowly return from pandemic life.

In the longer term, after our last program review, we changed the requirements for our major to require students to take more courses on ancient history and culture, and to allow elementary Greek to count toward the Classics major. Our goals were to make the Classics major more flexible and accessible to students who did not study Greek or Latin in high school, to encourage majors to pursue both classical languages at least to the intermediate level, and to have majors develop broader competence in Greek and Roman history and culture. A second change, starting in AY17, was to expand our Core offerings, so that Classics now offers multiple courses in 4 different parts of the Core (Fine Arts, Literature, History, and Engaging Difference and Justice). We have also contributed two Enduring Questions courses to the Renewed Core since its establishment, one taught by Prof. Polt and the other by Prof. Eisenfeld (which had its second iteration during the challenging pandemic year). The primary goal of these changes was to increase our contributions to the Core curriculum and expose a wider population to the study of Classics, but a secondary benefit may be to make it easier for students to fit a Classics major into their schedule. Our Core courses have become very popular, regularly filling to capacity and remaining that way through add/drop period.

One of our stated goals last year (and each year) was to see more Classics majors take both Greek and Latin, but that goal is in tension with our desire for students to take a wide range of Civilization courses in order to acquire a broad basic knowledge of the ancient world. Our goal of making the Classics major more accessible to those without high school Latin or Greek has had mixed success. “Walk-on” Classics majors face significant barriers to entry, and often need to do a summer language program to accelerate their progress toward advanced language coursework. We hope that the conversations we are currently engaged in regarding the possibility of a new Classical Civilization major/track will help to address that goal, helping remove a barrier for students who are not able to begin their ancient language study until they arrive at Boston College. We also discussed adding a 3000-level capstone Civilization course for our majors; major numbers in past years have made that impractical, but we expect that a new option would allow both language-focused and civilization-focused students to work together and give us the critical mass needed to launch a capstone.

As we have rebuilt our FT faculty, we have made it a high priority to find faculty who could add innovative and compelling courses on classical civilization to our major and/or the Core curriculum, as well as strong language courses at every level. More diverse course offerings is something our graduating seniors consistently request, and we have taken important steps toward that goal. Recent additions include courses on the City of Rome, Roman Spectacles, Multiculturalism in the Roman Empire, Greeks and Barbarians, Death & Dying in Ancient Greece, Ancient Comedy, Beast Literature, and Ancient Medicine. With the arrival of Prof. Sapsford and attaining 6 full-time faculty, we have an influx of exciting new courses that will provide additional opportunities for students (and for cross-disciplinary and inter-department collaboration), such as *The Chorus: Ancient and Modern*, *Roman Egypt*, and *Sex and Gender in the Ancient World*.

The multi-year revision of our Elementary Latin courses, spearheaded by Asst. Prof. of the Practice Mark Thatcher, seems to have reached a successful conclusion for the present. We spent the last few years trying out different elementary Latin textbooks in the hope of finding one that would be both more accessible and better preparation for intermediate-level courses. After much experimentation, we have landed on a textbook that meets those goals, at least for most students. Enrollment continues to oscillate, but student satisfaction as expressed on evaluations is fairly high. Another long-standing goal is to add a fourth hour for language drill. In AY18 and 19, we took advantage of higher than usual graduate student yield to pilot first an optional drill section for the elementary Latin courses, then to hire a tutor for one-on-one sessions with struggling students. We continue to look for more effective ways to provide support for students outside class and hope to find a consistent solution to this challenge that will bring our beginning and intermediate language curriculum contact hours more in line with practice in our peer institution departments, which often have more than our 3 hours.

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

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