

The BA in English: Goals, Outcomes, and Assessment

Work Performed by MSU Students with a BA in English

MSU students who complete the English major have learned how to read closely, think critically, and communicate persuasively. In other words, they know how to use language to solve personal, professional, and societal problems. Through their knowledge of English and American literature and language, they also understand the aesthetic, historical, and philosophical currents that inform their culture and shape their roles in society.

With this strong background in language, students with BAs in English typically pursue the following careers and/or graduate programs:

- MA and PhD programs in literature or rhetoric and composition
- Law School
- Secondary Teaching
- Positions in business, industry, or government agencies

Goals for BA in English

Given this mission to prepare our majors for such lives, the English Department at MSU pursues the following *goals* in the BA program:

- That students write well developed expository, persuasive, and critical essays.
- That students design documents to meet the needs of readers.
- That students edit documents effectively.
- That students understand the rhetorical strategies writers use to achieve their purposes.
- That students understand the aesthetic and structural characteristics of the genres of English and American literature.
- That students understand the critical and historical contexts of English and American literature.
- That students attribute quotations and document sources correctly and ethically.

Outcomes/Objectives

To ensure that the BA program in English reaches these goals, the faculty members pursue the following *outcomes*, each expressing what our graduates should *know and be able to do*:

- Develop appropriate content to support claims in expository, persuasive, and critical writing.
- Arrange content in appropriate patterns—spatial, chronological, relational, logical—to develop ideas persuasively.

- Edit to meet readers' expectations for clarity and correctness.
- Analyze and evaluate the choices writers make to achieve rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.
- Show understanding the aesthetic and rhetorical structures that inform the genres of English and American literature.
- Show understanding the major themes and schools of criticism in the history of English and American literature.
- Quote primary and secondary sources correctly and document research correctly and ethically.

Strategies

To achieve these programmatic outcomes, faculty members employ the following strategies:

- Offer survey courses that give students the foundation to study English and American literature in more depth.
- Offer junior-level writing courses as well as courses in creative writing.
- Offer courses in the history of the language and linguistics as well as in critical theory and composition theory.
- Offer upper-division courses focusing on major authors, genres, and historical periods.
- Employ a writing-centered pedagogy, focusing on peer response and revision.
- Offer Speaker Programs and Writing Contests to encourage a sense of professionalism.
- Run a University Writing Center, where a faculty Director and trained student tutors assist English majors (and other MSU students) to grow as writers.

Methods of Assessment

To *assess* the success of these pedagogical strategies in reaching our programmatic outcomes, the English Department proposes the following three-part plan:

- Student Portfolios
- Exit Interviews
- Exit Surveys