

UT MARTIN ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2024

Our most important job is to help our students succeed!

Five-Year Program Reviews

During April, we will complete the Five-Year Program Reviews for International Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, and the Honors Program. All programs that are not otherwise externally accredited are required to complete a program review every five years. The outline for the self-study and all other information related to the review can be found on the Accreditation and Assessment website

<https://www.utm.edu/offices-and-services/accreditation-and-assessment/institutional-assessment/assessment-forms.php>

The review requires an external evaluator from outside the state of Tennessee and a group of three faculty from our colleges outside the college in which the program resides. These reviews depend on the active participation of our faculty to serve on the review teams.

The programs scheduled for review next year are English, Spanish, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Agricultural Business. If you are interested in serving on one of these review teams, please contact Patty Flowers at pflowers@utm.edu to get your name on the list of potential reviewers.

General Education Reviews

The Committee on Instruction is charged with oversight of General Education. Each year, the Committee reviews the annual assessment reports for all Gen Ed courses. Additionally, each category of Gen Ed is subject to a Five-Year Review to determine if the courses of a given category of Gen Ed continue to meet the requirements of the category. This year the Committee is

reviewing courses in the Social and Behavioral Sciences category. Next spring courses in the Biological and Physical Systems and Mathematics categories will undergo five-year review.

From Data to Decisions, excerpts from Academic Program Annual Assessment Reports

Geology faculty met and determined that pre- and post-test questions based on the Earth Science Literacy Initiative for **GEOS 110 and GEOS 120** were too general. Faculty are making changes to questions to better reflect our learning outcomes. New pre- and post-test questions for GEOS 110 and GEOS 120 will be instituted and the current questions will be phased out. Post-test question for GEOS 130 will remain and we will continue to monitor post-test percentages.

In the College of Business and Global Affairs, in part due to lower numbers in **INST 495** and in part due to the addition of **POSC 403: Senior Seminar**, starting in fall 2023, these classes will be cross-listed and taught together. This shift may necessitate some changes to the structure of the required research project. For example, the lessons will be eliminated and instead students, working in groups, will have a much larger role in planning and executing their research poster showcase – flyer design, event promotion, website development, etc. At least for now, the plan is to keep the other components previously included – proposal, lit review, paper, poster & revision. Future assignments will continue to challenge students to increase their awareness of current international events and cultures,

consistent with the University's mission of equipping students to "serve in a diverse world."

In **BIOL 336**, the performance was similar to the previous cycle. The instructor had previously re-arranged the time spent on particular topics resulting in substantial improvement. Unfortunately, the benchmark was still not met for two questions related to mutations. The instructor is planning to further re-arrange the course to allow more time for discussion of the types of mutations.

Psychology students create a Professional Portfolio in Senior Seminar. In collaboration with the Office of Career Planning and Development (CPAD), Melanie Young came in to discuss resume-building and personal statements and provided students a template. Because of this, the quality of our academic vitae and professional resumes has increased.

English faculty have implemented several changes to **ENGL 499**, their capstone course. Part of the final project in ENGL 499 is to revise a research paper started in a previous class into a larger piece. The option to start a new paper from scratch is no longer available. Starting in AY 2023-24, students are required to submit an ePortfolio via Canvas, which is an opportunity to highlight several writing projects instead of just one. The canvas ePortfolio has proven reliable and user-friendly for both students and instructors in other ENGL classes, so the change is now implemented in ENGL 499.

We have known anecdotally that students enrolled in English courses struggle with the effective use of sources, including correctness of documentation. Assessment data backs this up. After some discussion, faculty decided to create a Canvas Module on the Effective use of Sources to be shared among all English faculty and used in our classes. This module, which we will have

ready to implement in Canvas courses Fall 2024, will provide one common resource for all instructors and students in all English classes. We hope that a more uniform approach to instruction on source-use will improve the teaching and learning in this important area.

The **Elementary Education Faculty** have implemented curricular changes to begin in Spring 2025, shifting methods courses to occur earlier in the K5 program. This will allow faculty to provide explicit modeling, instruction, and application opportunities for students specific to the use of informational text and writing instruction in the ELA classroom in TCED 352. This curriculum change will allow for greater time to explore informational literacy standards, discuss writing instruction, and provide opportunities for candidates to participate in hands-on activities and opportunities for implementation of comprehension and writing instruction.

The results of **History** assessment in 2022-2023 confirmed the need for additional faculty discussion with respect to fostering and assessing student abilities in historical analysis. Assessment results suggest that all faculty should continue to stress both thesis development and using writing assignments to increase historical knowledge in all upper-level courses.

Our present interest with the **Philosophy** Field Exam is confirming its validity as an assessment tool. There is no standardized field test in philosophy. The one we use is our own creation. During our 2018 Philosophy Program Review, the external reviewer examined our field exam and stated that it was good for our purposes. Two years ago, we established uniform paper guidelines. We are currently working to improve student portfolios by emphasizing these guidelines in our upper division courses, from which the portfolio papers originate.