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

Department/Program <u>Literature Core Program, AY 2025, English Department</u>

1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

The learning outcomes for the Literature Core Program were extensively revised during the 2022-2023 academic year as part of an overall internal review of the program.

1. Disciplinary Skills: The Power of Close Reading:
Close reading, or the careful analysis of literary texts, is the foundational skill of English as an academic discipline. It is also foundational to the Jesuit tradition of *eloquentia perfecta,* which refers to the cultivation, through the study of language, of the whole person who can act ethically in the world. Students will learn how to engage substantively with literary texts and to appreciate the unique qualities of literary language. They will develop the art and skill of close reading, which will enable them to appreciate the nuance and complexity of literary language and thereby discover meanings that are not apparent through superficial reading. They will learn how to recognize the formal properties of texts and think critically about them. They will be given opportunities to practice their own analytical and creative interpretations of texts.
- Students will learn to identify the unique qualities of literary language.
- Students will perform close-readings of literary texts, think critically about them, and produce their own analytical interpretations, including at least one essay of sustained textual analysis.

2. Humanistic Inquiry: Literature as Equipment for Living:
This phrase, drawn from literary scholar Kenneth Burke, highlights the humanistic dimension of literary study. Students will discover how literature can illuminate the 'big questions' that life raises and aid them in navigating the worlds they inhabit. Students will encounter texts drawn from a wide range of genres, styles, time periods, and media, as well as authors who belong to dominant and non-dominant groups. In working with these texts, they will learn how literature opens doorways onto the perspectives of other peoples, times, and cultures, and how it helps us imagine diverse ways of being human. Students will have opportunities to reflect on their own values and the principles that guide their life, often by discovering alternative ways of looking at the world. The course thus holds true to the ideal of *studia humanitatis*: it develops the habits of mind, heart, and imagination that contribute to student formation.
- Students will develop the skills of reflection by discussing and writing about literature in ways that help them understand their own values and the principles that guide their life.
- Students will examine how literature opens doorways onto the perspectives of other peoples, times, and cultures and how it helps us imagine diverse ways of being human.

3. How to be a College Student: Fostering Intellectual Community
A strong sense of community supercharges classroom discussions and enriches the learning experience of all its members. Students will experience a discussion-based course that encourages them to share ideas and perspectives with each other. They will have opportunities to forge meaningful human connections with each other, which can help them integrate into the larger BC community in healthy ways. Students will be invited to participate in activities that foster a sense of social and intellectual

community. By cultivating a sense of connection rooted in the life of the mind, students will gain a greater appreciation for the challenges and rewards of being active members of a larger community.

- Students will forge meaningful connections with each other as human beings and as readers, writers, thinkers, and members of an intellectual community.
- Students will explore different ways of bringing their whole person into the classroom.

2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

They are included in the detailed Teaching Guidelines that are distributed to all instructors each semester. Instructors include them on their syllabi. They are published on the English department's Literature Core website. They will be distributed to all advisors and incoming first-year students through the Academic Advising Center.

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

> This year's assessment was focused on how grading works in Lit Core, with a particular emphasis on being responsive to developments in generative AI. The use of AI has consequences for our ability to determine how students are mastering close reading and even grappling with the big questions that literature raises, our first two learning outcomes. Seen more broadly, the use of AI can also impact classroom community, our third learning outcome.

> In a whole department meeting, we shared data on grading and discussed best practices for engaging students directly in critical thinking. Following this meeting a subset of instructors met for a lunch discussion about grading rubrics and sample papers.

> We continued an ongoing process of ensuring that instructors incorporate our learning goals into their classroom instruction. This is done through review of syllabi before the start of the semester by the program director to make sure the readings, activities, and assignment are explicitly geared to the new learning goals. The Director also visits the classes of all new Lit Core instructors to inform 1:1 discussions of pedagogy and learning goals.

> Course evaluations were also reviewed for evidence of the three learning goals.

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?)

Maia McAleavey (director), Min Song (English department chair), Rebekah Mitsein (assistant English department chair), and members of the department Core Committee.

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?

Our conversations about grading and AI were far ranging. We engaged in deep conversation about the purpose of literature core and the best way to design assignments to help students feel that sense of purpose. These conversations will of course continue, but in the meantime we did come to some practical conclusions and recommendations. We shared sample grading rubrics , sample A papers, and a best practice AI disclosure agreement with all instructors.

The ongoing review of syllabi and course evaluations shows that our learning goals are being met. The Director reaches out to instructors who receives comments that specifically highlight a welcoming intellectual community, close reading ability, and grappling with big questions. Those instructors are invited to contribute materials to the Lit Core instructor canvas page.

The program director also gives direct feedback as necessary to instructors whose courses she visited to help them develop teaching methods that are aligned with the learning goals.

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

The Literature Core program underwent a comprehensive internal program review during AY 2023, which culminated in the development of new learning goals.