

Form E-1A for Boston College "Literature Core" Course Assessment
Dept. of Romance Languages & Literatures (May 2025)

1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed?

Students enrolled in RLL Literature Core courses will be expected, at the end of the course, to demonstrate the following abilities:

- ¶ Students will demonstrate the ability to read and evaluate texts critically.
- ¶ Students will demonstrate proficiency in employing academic prose to effectively sustain an original literary argument supported by textual evidence.
- ¶ Students will demonstrate an understanding of the differences between literary genres.
- ¶ Students will be familiar with representative texts drawn from a wide range of periods and be equipped to engage in an informed and critical way with similar texts in the future.
- ¶ Students will be able to identify and analyze the distinctive features of literary productions.

2) Where are these learning outcomes published?

They are published on the "About" page of the RLL Department website:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/morrissey/departments/romance-languages/about.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?)

A. Direct Evidence: Analysis in-class discussions, quizzes and exams, and a representative sampling of final papers.

B. Indirect Evidence: Student survey. An online Qualtrics student survey is administered in each Lit Core class, asking how well they believe they have achieved the learning outcomes, what they found especially helpful, and what suggestions they have for improvement of the course in future iterations.

This year, in carrying out our assessment, we chose to focus on the specific Learning Outcome: "Students will demonstrate the ability to read and evaluate texts critically."

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 evidence is interpreted by the instructors of the courses in question who submits a summary of their discussions to the Dept Chair (who is also the dept "Core Liaison"). The results of the

online student surveys and the discussions by the Lit Core instructors are then also shared with and discussed by the entire FT faculty of the department, who might suggest revisions in light of the collective experience of the department in Core courses that they have taught in past semesters.

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?)

Results of 2025 Assessment Process:

As far as the indirect evidence -- the online survey -- is concerned, we had approximately a 50% return, i.e., 34 responses, and happily, all the students responding said that they either "*Strongly agreed*" or "*Mildly Agreed*" that this year's selected LO had been met.

The same conclusion was reached by the instructors involved. I quote directly from the report of the sub-committee which evaluated student performance in our Lit Core Course, i.e., "Contextos: Introductory to Literary Analysis in Spanish:"

"We discussed class performance in the 3 Contextos sections offered this semester, and looked at a total of 15 final papers, more than 1/3 of the total papers submitted.

As a course, Contextos is designed for the express purpose of familiarizing students with the terminology and analytical skills needed to read and evaluate texts critically. In this sense, the selected learning objective is the driving force behind all class activities and assessments. Class discussion is often centered on close readings of selected passages of prose, poetry, and drama, and students learn to evaluate these texts both in purely intellectual terms (e.g. through in-class presentations and written essays) and via creative means (e.g. dramatic enactments and creative writing in the same style as the assigned texts).

As a whole, all Contextos instructors were satisfied that the vast majority of students enrolled in the course are able to read and evaluate literary texts in an academically rigorous critical fashion. Some students do so to a merely satisfactory level, while others excel, but all are capable of thinking beyond questions of plot. This is borne out in the final papers of the course, in which students grappled with everything ranging from metaphorical readings of assigned texts to metaliterary concerns (what are different authors proposing about literature or their own readership?) and veiled questions of social justice that arise in the texts under study.

One complication to the course objective selected for study is that this year, for the first time, instructors have noted what appears to be AI-generated writing throughout the semester. Contextos instructors have agreed to work with the course coordinator to brainstorm how AI might best be addressed and used in the class without compromising the students' development of their own critical thinking and writing skills, particularly as pertains to challenging texts."

Results of 2024 Assessment Process:

Both the examination of student work and the students' own feedback (via the online Qualtrics survey) concluded that the learning outcome had been met. In the online survey, the overwhelming majority of the 68 students who responded indicated that they "strongly" agreed and 8 "mildly" agreed that the LO ("understanding of the differences between literary genres") had been reached. At the same time, it was noted that at times the students seem to lack a command of the specific terminology used to discuss -- beyond an elementary level -- the nature of any given genre, its features, its finality. Hence, more conscious effort was made in the course of the semester to impart to the student a more sophisticated command of such an analysis. This

year's results showed progress on the part of the students in this regard, so we are pleased with the effort made, but will continue to work on the issue and hope for even more enhanced results.

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

The last Self-study and External Review were carried out in 2010.