

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION

Academic Year

Assessment Activity

2000-2001

Alumni Survey

The alumni survey on learning goals was developed in 2001, but the alumni address lists maintained by the university and by the department proved inadequate. Faculty took on the project of updating these lists in 2002. The survey was modified slightly after examination of an alumni survey provided by N.A.S.T., the department's accrediting agency. The department mailed the survey in the Summer of 2002. See 2002-2003 for a summary of responses.

Exam in Drama 10 and Drama 186 (Goal 1.1)

This short answer exam on theatre history and literature is now in its sixth year of use. It was revised in 2002 and 2003 to more accurately reflect the priorities of the history/literature professors. The test results and subsequent discussions have led to a revision in Drama 10 curriculum. Genres, particularly Melodrama, are now introduced in a manner intended to correlate better with their presentation in 163, 185 and 186.

Essay in Drama 10 and Drama 163 (Goal 1.2)

The use of this rubric was postponed until Fall 2003 (See below).

2001-2002

Employ Scoring Rubric for Auditions (Goal 3.1)

The department began using auditions as an assessment tool a year ahead of schedule. After the first year, acting and directing faculty consulted with Roger DeLaurier, a professional casting director. This consultation resulted in changes to the audition procedure and to the

rubric employed. In 2002 the acting faculty discussed the assessment data and found that students need improvement in:

- 1) Selecting audition material that offers better opportunities for acting,
- 2) Selecting dress that will enhance the audition and
- 3) Finding opportunities for effective movement.

After consultation with students, faculty has revised the score sheet, which is returned to auditioners each Fall, to make it a better teaching tool. In fact, the students are very eager to get this sheet back; they value the feedback it provides.

Employ Scoring Rubric for Design (Goal 3.2)

Student projects in scenic, sound, lighting and makeup design have been scored by the design faculty using this rubric in Fall 2002. In most cases the faculty was very favorably impressed by the work of the student designers.

Employ Scoring Rubric for Dance (Goal 3.3)

This rubric was used by the Dance faculty to score student pieces in Dance 117D in Spring 2003. The one area in which student scores were low was Depth of Expression. The faculty has increased the use of improvisation in the course to help students to access their emotions more effectively.

2002-2003

Alumni Survey

Over fifty alumni responded to the Department's survey on student learning goals. On a 4-point scale, they indicated their level of confidence in each of the following areas:

Express a knowledge of the history and literature of the theatre: 3.20.

Analyze a script: 3.42

Communicate clearly both in speech and in writing: 3.74.

Display specialized skills in an area of theatre or dance: 3.22.

Demonstrate basic skills in several areas of the art: 3.18.

Collaborate effectively with other artists: 3.46.

No more than 4% of alumni found any of these goals unimportant; no more than 4% suggested additional goals for the Department to consider, except that:

25% suggested additional training in the business aspects of a career in theatre arts. In response, faculty is developing a Blackboard Organization called the Theatre Arts Career Center to provide advice on preparation for graduate school and for professional careers. Jacqueline Antaramian, an alumna and a respected professional actress, discussed career-related issues with students in Intermediate Acting and Period Styles in the Spring of 2004. The design faculty offered a workshop on portfolio preparation in the Fall of 2004. More discussion of these issues follows in the section on the student focus group (2003-2004).

Employ Rubric for Crews, Casts (Goal 4, 5.2)

This rubric was employed by design and directing faculty and production stage managers to assess the performance of casts and crews on all three productions in Fall, 2002. The students' performance was rated highly in all categories.

Employ Rubric for Term Papers (Goal 2.3)

Theatre Arts faculty determined at the Fall, 2002 retreat that design and acting classes do not offer the assignments most appropriate for assessment of student writing. At the Fall 2004 retreat, faculty revisited the idea of increasing the writing component of these classes.

2003-2004

Senior Focus Group or Panel Discussion

(A discussion among five or six randomly selected seniors discussing their experience of the program centered around the learning goals. Faculty would receive an edited transcript for use in assessment.)
A graduate seminar in Communications facilitated a focus group of graduating seniors in the Spring of 2004. The seminar presented the students' conclusions to a meeting of Theatre Arts faculty in March. They also prepared a written report which was distributed and discussed by faculty at the department's Fall 2004 retreat.

The members of the focus group praised the teacher-student interaction in the department, and felt confident in the acting and design skills they had learned. They also noted some areas in which they'd like more training or more of a voice. One of these was in the

area of preparation for a career in theatre. Faculty noted that this same area had been mentioned frequently in the alumni survey.

The department has addressed this area in the past through workshops run by guest professionals, but they could not always be scheduled at times convenient for all students. In Spring of 2005 a faculty committee examined this issue, including a survey of what other universities offer and a discussion with Theatre Arts majors in each specialty the program offers. The committee developed a proposal for a new course to address post-graduate preparation and presented it at the Fall 2005 retreat.

Addressing the same area the faculty has decided to require students auditioning in the Fall to provide resumes, on which they will receive feedback from professors. The faculty is also exploring the use of business letters and statements of purpose as future writing assignments and assessment activities. For further progress in this area, please see 2006-2007.

Essay in Drama 10 and 186 (Goal 1.2)

A writing rubric was employed in Drama 10 in the Fall of 2003. A new assignment was designed in order to place more emphasis on this goal. The history/literature faculty has revised the original rubric; the new rubric is now included in the Assessment Plan. In Drama 10, the students scored well on content (understanding the characteristics that define two different genres of drama) with a 3.12 average on a 4-point scale. They supported their statements adequately with evidence (2.94), but did not fare so well in clarity and writing mechanics (2.35).

The use of this assignment has been delayed in the upper division course. Initially the plan called for this paper to be assigned in Drama 186, but faculty felt that a more appropriate writing assignment was offered in Drama 163. At the same time, though, 163 became part of General Education, with the result that it no longer has a high concentration of theatre Arts majors. Faculty has developed a writing assignment which was given and scored in Drama 186 in Spring, 2005.

2004-2005

Employ Scoring Rubric for Auditions (Goal 3.1)

This has become an annual activity. After consultation with students, faculty again revised the score sheet, which is returned to auditioners each Fall, to make it a better teaching tool. In fact, the students are eager to get this sheet back; they value the feedback it provides.

Essay in Drama 10 and 186 (Goal 1.2)

This essay was written by Drama 186 students in the Spring of '05 and was scored by faculty. In the upper division class, students again scored well on content (understanding the characteristics that define genres of drama) with a 3.07 average on a 4-point scale. Like the lower division students, they earned their lowest rating in writing mechanics (2.36).

Graduate School Survey

Faculty generated a list of graduate schools recently attended by two or more Theatre Arts graduates. Survey questions focusing on the department's learning goals were developed and the surveys were mailed in Spring 2005. Predictably, the list of graduate programs was a short one: only about 10 surveys were mailed; 4 were returned. Therefore the results qualify only as anecdotal evidence.

That said, the responses are encouraging. The respondents were unanimous in approving the Department's learning goals, and none suggested additions to these goals.

In knowledge of theatre history and literature, 3 of the 4 respondents rated our graduates in the top half of their graduate students.

In script analysis and in communication skills, 2 rated our graduates in the top 50% and 2 in the top 20%.

In understanding the production process, all 4 respondents placed our graduates in the top 50%.

In specialized skills and in ability to collaborate, 3 of 4 rated our graduates in the top 20% of their graduate students; the other, in the top 50%.

Timeline for Assessment Activities

The Department has completed the first five years of its plan. The faculty has approved a schedule for the next four years of assessment activities.

In addition, in response to its program review, the Department, began developing an assessment activity to measure skills specific to teaching in Drama 138. Faculty met with a group of secondary teachers to discuss which skills the teachers see as most useful for students planning careers in education. However, the English Credential program has chosen to take responsibility for assessment in this class.

2005-2006

Employ Scoring Rubric for Auditions (Goal 3.1)

Faculty scored the Fall auditions using this rubric for the fifth consecutive year. The activity is considered so useful for students (both as a gauge of achievement and as a learning opportunity) that the Department has included it whether or not it's on the assessment schedule.

Essay in Drama 10 and Drama 186 (Goal 1.2)

This activity was scheduled in a second consecutive year because improvement in student writing is such an important issue. Students in both classes have written the required essays; the scoring is completed. Once again the students in both classes scored fairly well (above 2.5 on a 4-point scale) in content. Drama 10 students again showed some weakness in writing mechanics (2.45), though the rating is improved over Fall of 2003. Encouragingly, the upper division students in Drama 186 scored higher in that category (2.7). There is, of course, substantial room for improvement.

In Spring of '06, faculty for Drama 10, Drama 163, Drama 185 and Drama 186 met to discuss challenges, successes and curricular changes in working to improve student writing. Changes in curriculum will be reported in the 2006-2007 section.

Because of a change in the personnel teaching in the history-literature sequence, a meeting was held to revise the short-answer examination given in Drama 10 and Drama 186. The revision is now complete.

2006-2007

Curricular Changes: Writing

All of the instructors in the History-Literature sequence have made and are making changes intended to improve their students' writing mechanics. An

interview and an iterative writing assignment have been added to the curriculum in Drama 10. In Drama 163, 185 and 186, the number of in-class writing assignments and short-answer quizzes has been increased. Drama 186 has also added an iterative writing assignment along with individual student-faculty conferences while papers are in progress.

Assess teaching-related skills in Drama 138

As noted above, the English Credential Program has taken responsibility for assessment in this class.

Preparation for careers in Theatre Arts

Further training in this area was suggested by the department's alumni survey and by its focus group of graduating seniors. This need was addressed strongly this year. The faculty feels that students are best served by guest artist/teachers who are actively engaged in today's market. In Spring 2007 a guest professional offered a course in The Business of Theatre. In addition, the department has received a donation which will fund more guests artists and workshops in the future, as well as internships for students with professional arts organizations.

Employ rubric for Crews (Goal 4, 5.2)

Stage managers employed the rubric to assess performance by students on crews of all three main stage productions for Fall 2006. The ratings were very high. On a 4-point scale, crew members were rated 3.57 in commitment, 3.67 in support, 3.70 in demeanor and 3.60 in accepting and employing criticism.

Employ rubric for Casts.....(Goal 4, 5.2)

Directors used the rubric to assess performance of student casts of the three main stage productions for Fall 2006. These ratings were even higher than those for the crews. On a 4-point scale, cast members were rated 3.85 for commitment, 3.92 for support and for employing criticism and 3.90 for demeanor. The faculty is proud of the skill and commitment that students bring to the University Theatre season.

2007-2008

Employ Scoring Rubric for Design (Goal 3.2)

The design faculty scored all of the student designs created for University Theatre productions during 2007-2008. There were nine designs done by eight students, including scenery, costumes, lighting and hair/make-up. The work was rated highly: 3.4 on a 4-point scale for responsibility, 3.11 for technique, and 3.3 for creativity, documentation and rationale respectively.

Faculty agree that the relatively lower score in technique reflects a lack of skill in drafting. Drama 157, the drafting class, has not been offered recently. It will be offered in 2008-2009; its frequency should be part of an overall discussion of the Design curriculum.

Employ Scoring Rubric for Dance (Goal 3.3)

Dance 117D, normally a Spring semester class, was not offered in Spring 2008. This activity will be completed in Spring 2009 instead.

2008-2009

Senior Focus Group or Panel Discussion
Exam in Drama 10 and Drama 186 (Goal 1.1)

Timeline for Assessment Activities

At the Fall 2008 Retreat, the faculty approved a schedule of activities through 2012-2013.

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES NOT INCLUDED IN THE PLAN

2000-2001

A rubric for scoring student writing skills was employed in Drama 137, Creative Drama. The instructor is continuing to use the rubric; the data suggests that its use is helping to improve student writing by demonstrating that better writing mechanics will result in better grades.

2001-2002

Assessment of student performance in Drama 131, Playwriting, indicated that for several semesters students have been slow to master the standard format for dramatic scripts. As a result, a new assignment has been developed that focuses on this skill and that results in its carrying more weight in determining semester grades. This assignment was used again in 2002-2003 and has become a regular part of the Playwriting curriculum.