

REVIEW OF THE B.A. IN ENGLISH

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 23.0101
English Language and Literature, General

OVERVIEW

The B.A. in English program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of English within the College of Arts and Sciences. The department also offers undergraduate minors in English, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Writing; an M.A., M.S. in English; graduate certificate programs in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School; and a Ph.D. in English Studies. The last review of the B.A. in English program occurred in 2010-2011.

Students enrolling in the B.A. in English program select either a general plan of study or one of four sequences: creative writing, English teacher education, publishing studies, or technical writing and rhetorics. Regardless of the sequence selected, students in the program learn how to write well, read critically, develop investigative research skills, and work in digital environments and social networks. Students are exposed to multiple sub-disciplines in the field, among them literary and cultural studies, children’s literature, linguistics, rhetoric and composition, technical communications, creative writing, teaching of English to speakers of other languages, and publishing. Graduates of the program qualify for entry-level positions in many fields. Some graduates choose to teach English abroad. Students completing the English teacher education sequence qualify for initial teacher licensure in Illinois with an endorsement in English Language Arts. Alumni have pursued graduate education in a broad array of fields, among them library and information science, education, law, criminal justice, entrepreneurship, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

The B.A. in English program at Illinois State consistently ranks first among undergraduate English programs at Illinois public universities with respect to enrollments and degrees conferred. In addition to serving English majors and minors, faculty members teaching in the B.A. in English program support students in nearly every undergraduate major at the University through courses that meet General Education requirements or through courses that meet completion requirements of other academic programs.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2011-2018

B.A. in English, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
General English/no sequence	349	351	296	279	243	235	183	189
Creative Writing						11	14	22
English Teacher Education	256	191	169	131	125	127	137	154
Publishing Studies	44	46	52	47	52	51	39	39
Technical Writing and Rhetorics								0
Total	649	588	517	457	420	424	373	404

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Graduating Fiscal Year 2011-2018

B.A. in English, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
General English/no sequence	89	81	101	92	69	70	72	61
Creative Writing							2	1
English Teacher Education	52	77	64	51	45	29	27	29
Publishing Studies	11	21	14	18	18	22	13	13
Technical Writing and Rhetorics								
Total	152	179	179	161	132	121	114	104

[See table notes on the following page]

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

The creative writing sequence was established effective May 16, 2016.

The technical writing and rhetorics sequence was established effective May 21, 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

- The program will teach students how to critically read, speak, write, and revise across an extensive range of texts and technologies appropriate to the disciplines of English studies.
- The program will teach students how to understand and be able to apply practically the research methodologies appropriate for the disciplines of English studies.
- The program will teach students how to evaluate and synthesize ideas and information from a range of sources relevant to English studies and to use that knowledge productively.
- The program will teach students how to understand the social and cultural effects of language and use language rhetorically.

Students learning outcomes

- Related to the first program goal cited above, students successfully completing the program will be able to comprehend a familiar or unfamiliar text in any of several genres with knowledge of its cultural and historical contexts, demonstrate awareness of the historical and generic contexts of texts and their traditions, read and demonstrate familiarity with a variety of texts from a culturally diverse range of historical periods and national origins, and critically reflect upon their readings of a range of texts. Students will be able to identify and analyze themes, issues, etc. across texts and genres with knowledge of their cultural and historical contexts; identify rhetorical strategies; design and present effective lesson plans, assignment prompts, and other classroom documents (English teacher education students); and perform effectively in spoken situations, such as in the classroom, during presentations, during meetings, and class discussions. Students will be able to think imaginatively, innovatively, originally, and with attention to absence as well as presence; comprehend instructor feedback and revise accordingly; and demonstrate bold, substantive revision, which may entail changing genre, organization, argument, topic, and medium.
- Related to the second program goal cited above, students successfully completing the program will understand the features of credible sources, including timeliness, authorship expertise, peer-review process, topicality, publisher status, and appropriateness of medium. Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the ways in which texts are produced, with particular attention to the cultural and historical contexts of production; find the kinds of information that are relevant to the problem or issue being addressed; use the various methods of English studies disciplines in connection or juxtaposition with one another; articulate a reasoned position about the social and philosophical value of the disciplines of English studies and their unique and shared research methodologies; demonstrate the research methodologies of special disciplines during coursework as articulated in individual faculty syllabi; and demonstrate knowledge of citation practices appropriate for the disciplines of English Studies. Alumni will be able to use English studies disciplinary methodologies in their work place.
- Related to the third program goal cited above, students successfully completing the program will be able to integrate secondary information into their own written and oral work in a manner that both supports their rhetoric and honors the source of information and will be familiar with the kinds of technology that allow them to produce, engage, and manage electronic and printed texts. English teacher education students will be able to evaluate and synthesize appropriate instructional materials, teaching practices, and acquired practitioner knowledge in their design of lessons and unit plans. Publishing sequence students and English majors with interests in publishing and/or creative writing will be able to oversee the publication of a student-run journal, including researching, editing, designing, proofing, and producing the publication websites.
- Related to the fourth program goal cited above, students successfully completing the program will be able to use vivid descriptions and (re)create sensory experiences using examples, narrative, data, and emotional appeals; demonstrate clarity at both the micro and macro levels of discourse; demonstrate a lively and effective prose

style using literary, linguistic, and rhetorical techniques, showing knowledge of rhythm, diction, syntax, structure, and transitions; demonstrate knowledge of the history and structure of the English language; effectively employ multi-media material and visual rhetoric/poetics; demonstrate awareness of civility and incivility in and outside the English studies classroom and adopt effective verbal and written communications with instructors and peers. Students will understand the linguistic concepts of “correct” usage, usage levels, and the dialects that make up American English and the social and cultural implications of language differences; the complexity of grammar; and rhetorical situation, rhetorical appeals, theories of invention, audience and forum analysis, and elements of style and argumentation. Graduates will be able to articulate how an understanding of the cultural and social effects of language has helped them post-graduation and in the work place.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

Students enroll in a general plan of study or in one of four sequences: creative writing, English teacher education, publishing studies, or technical writing and rhetorics.

Graduation requirements (creative writing):

120 credit hours consisting of 43 credit hours of English courses exclusive of ENG 101 (the English course required of all first-time-in-college students regardless of their major), 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and elective course credit hours sufficient to meet the 120-credit hour requirement. The 43 credit hours of English courses include 22 credit hours in required English courses, 6 credit hours in elective English courses at the 300 level, 12 credit hours of creative writing courses, and 3 credit hours in the studies in creative writing seminar course.

Graduation requirements (English teacher education):

120 credit hours consisting of 46 credit hours of English courses exclusive of ENG 101 (the English course required of all first-time-in-college students regardless of their major), 26 credit hours in professional development (educator preparation) courses required of all teacher education students regardless of their major, 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and elective course credit hours sufficient to meet the 120-credit hour requirement. The 46 credit hours of English courses include 18 credit hours in courses related to licensure and accreditation requirements; 7 credit hours in general English courses; 3 credit hours each in courses related to British literature, American literature, language and linguistics, non-Western literature, and adolescent literature; and 6 credit hours of elective English courses at the 200 through 300 level.

Graduation requirements (publishing studies):

120 credit hours consisting of 46 credit hours in the major, 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and elective course credit hours sufficient to meet the 120-credit hour requirement. The 46 credit hours in the major include 9 credit hours in foundational English courses; 16 credit hours in required English courses including 6 credit hours from two of the following areas: British literatures and cultures, American literatures and cultures, global literatures and cultures, children’s literature, or women’s literature; 12 credit hours in advanced English courses with 9 credit hours at the 300 level; 3 credit hours in English elective courses at the 200 or 300 level; and 6 credit hours of professional practice.

Graduation requirements (technical writing or rhetorics):

120 credit hours consisting of 40 credit hours of English courses exclusive of ENG 101 (the English course required of all first-time-in-college students regardless of their major), 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and elective course credit hours sufficient to meet the 120-credit hour requirement. The 40 credit hours of English courses include 24 credit hours of sequence courses.

Graduation requirements (non-sequence):

120 credit hours consisting of 40 credit hours of English courses exclusive of ENG 101 (the English course required of all first-time-in-college students regardless of their major and exclusive of courses in the teaching of English), 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and elective course credit hours sufficient to meet the 120-credit hour requirement. The 40 credit hours of English courses include 7 credits hours of required foundational courses; 3 credit hours of specified courses in rhetorical theory and applications, poetry, drama, or prose); 3 credit hours each in courses related to British literature, American literature, languages and linguistics, and advanced writing; and 18 credit hours in English elective courses, of which at least 12 credit hours must be at the 200 or 300 level.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

The Department of English sponsors summer study abroad opportunities in England, subject to student interest and availability of funds for instructor stipends.

Department faculty (Fall 2018)

33 tenure track faculty members (18 Professors, 12 Associate Professors, and 3 Assistant Professors)

20 non-tenure track faculty members (8 full-time and 12 part-time, totaling 10.9 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 8.6 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 11.1 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The English teacher education sequence is affiliated with the teacher education unit at Illinois State University which was last accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 2012 and which has applied for initial accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation (CAEP), which is the successor to NCATE. The English teacher education sequence is currently recognized by National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) through February 1, 2020. However, sequence faculty has opted not to continue its affiliation with NCTE to instead focus on CAEP accreditation and compliance with state educator preparation program guidelines.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The Department of English notes a nationwide trend over the past decade of declining enrollments in post-secondary English programs, exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008, but sees a positive trend in national news venues touting the need for broad training in the humanities for numerous professions. The department notes studies demonstrating that English majors may make less in the workforce at the entry level but gain significant salary increases over time and report greater job satisfaction and longevity in their careers. While the difficult economic climate in Illinois is also thought to have had a negative impact on enrollments, the department is starting to experience enrollment increases. Indeed, career opportunities for English majors are more varied than ever before. Graduates of the B.A. in English program go on to successful careers as technical writers and communicators, creative writers, bloggers and social media experts, lawyers, teachers and educators at all levels, and trainers and consultants at a wide range of businesses. English publishing majors work in publishing houses, small presses, and university presses as well as for online and print magazines. A growing number of program completers enter graduate programs in library and information science; several now work in major university libraries or in community public libraries.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

In response to previous program review recommendations, the Department of English has created an award-winning student learning outcomes assessment plan for the B.A. in English program with revised goals for the major, established a computer classroom in the new Publications Unit space, worked with Enrollment Management and Academic Services at the University to initiate more robust recruitment and retention efforts, and expanded outreach to Milner Library subject specialists. The department has also worked to balance curricular offerings with faculty resources by offering more General Education classes taught by tenure track faculty members, clarifying the gateway and culminating courses of the program to enable more faculty members to teach them, bolstering offerings in publishing studies, and creating sequences in creative writing and technical writing and rhetorics.

Major findings

The B.A. in English program continues to model an innovative approach to English studies that is unique in its ability to offer a diverse yet integrative plan of study. Since the last self-study, the program has benefitted from a detailed assessment plan that effectively guides programmatic change; the creation of the English Studies Commons,

a physical space intended to foster community-building and intellectual connections; an enhanced relationship with alumni; the creation of sequences that offer alternatives to students interested in careers other than teaching; active measures taken to improve the climate of inclusivity in the department; and the implementation of recruiting campaigns that involve faculty across the department. Data for fall 2016 show that the program enrolled more English majors and conferred more bachelor's degrees in English than any other public university in Illinois. However, declines in major enrollment, which are reflective of national trends, suggest that opportunities for improvement remain.

Initiatives and plans

- Build on existing outreach efforts to recruit undergraduate majors from Illinois high schools and community colleges.
- Explore internationalizing undergraduate enrollments through study abroad and faculty-student exchange programs.
- Capitalize on program strengths and increase enrollments through the potential creation of new programs such as select online master's programs and a five-year bachelor's/master's program in English teacher education.
- Increase supervision of on-site teacher candidates by tenure-track faculty in English teacher education.
- Continue to stabilize and grow the publishing sequence and hire a tenure-track faculty member in publishing studies.
- Expand professional development and career preparation opportunities for students.
- Explore the creation of information literacy and methodology training opportunities for majors.
- Further develop assessment of majors, particularly in terms of digital literacies and critical reading skills.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.A. in English program to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the program for a thorough, well-documented, critical, and forward-looking self-study report. Among its noteworthy sections are the discussions of comparator and aspirational programs. Faculty has drawn on those analyses to identify the program niche among comparator programs at Illinois public universities (i.e., an integrative approach to English studies) and to identify actions faculty could take to enhance the program with respect to the quality indicators faculty has prioritized.

The committee commends faculty and staff for their efforts to maintain a program that is responsive to changing student needs and career opportunities and for drawing on student feedback to do so. The committee commends faculty members for their extensive efforts to develop a comprehensive student learning outcomes assessment plan since the 2010 program review, for implementing the new plan, and for drawing on assessment findings to inform the numerous changes subsequently made to the program to improve student learning and the student experience. In developing the new plan, faculty expanded assessment methods from one (senior portfolio review) to many (including both direct and indirect methods). Among the program changes informed by assessment findings are establishment of the creative writing sequence and the technical writing and rhetorics sequence, revisions of existing courses and creation of new courses, changes to course titles and descriptions, provision of additional support for transfer students, and development of the English Studies Commons. Also notable is the Assessment Archive developed and maintained by the department to document assessment efforts and findings, enable longitudinal analyses of student learning, and provide resources for faculty in designing courses and assessment methods. The committee congratulates the program on its 2013 University Assessment Initiative Award.

The committee recognizes faculty and staff for the extensive co-curricular opportunities afforded students in the B.A. in English program. Those include initiatives sponsored by two registered student organizations supported by the department (Sigma Tau Delta and the English Studies Association) and learning opportunities available through the Publications Unit of the department. Among the co-curricular offerings are the English Studies Symposium, the English Studies-at-Large Conference, two journals that publish student works (*Polyglossia* and *Euphemism*), internships, and opportunities to attend and assist with professional conferences. The committee commends efforts by faculty to involve students in research and creative activities through those and other co-curricular opportunities.

The committee recognizes the Department of English for its commitment to diversity and inclusion among its students and faculty as evidenced by actions the department has taken to promote an inclusive learning environment and by results of those actions. Ongoing and robust efforts to recruit students from racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline and at the University have contributed to an increase in the percentage of students self-identifying with those groups from 11.8 percent in fall 2009 to 19.1 percent in fall 2013 to 23.7 percent in fall 2017. Faculty members continue to seek ways to infuse diversity across the curriculum and co-curricular opportunities, and the department supports those efforts through professional development. In response to student feedback, the department has developed a commons area for students to gather and collaborate. Through its Equity and Diversity Committee, the department has infrastructure in place to continue assessing needs and making recommendations regarding diversity and inclusion in the coming years.

The committee recognizes the Department of English for its contributions to instruction for non-majors through General Education courses and courses that meet requirements of other academic programs at the University. The self-study report cites service to nearly 5,400 students through General Education courses in a single academic year. Since the last program review, more tenure-track faculty members in the department are teaching General Education courses, and the department has offered more General Education courses online to meet students' needs, particularly students wanting to continue their education during the summer term while away from campus. To deliver so many sections to so many students, the department relies on contributions from its graduate teaching assistants. The committee commends the department for the extensive training and support it provides its graduate assistants to ensure quality undergraduate educational experiences.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2026, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Seek ways to increase the percentage of graduates completing the program within four years. Since the last program review, the percentage of B.A. in English program graduates who complete the program within four years has consistently been lower than the average across all undergraduate programs at the University. However, the growing gap between the percentages is of greater concern to the committee, because of the impact time-to-degree has on students' entry into the job market, graduate school matriculation, and costs incurred by students in obtaining their degree. In Fiscal 2014, 61.0 percent of B.A. in English program completers graduated within four years, while 64.3 percent of all students completing an undergraduate degree at the University that year graduated within four years. By Fiscal 2017, the percentage for B.A. in English program graduates had dropped to 51.6 percent while the percentage across all undergraduate programs at the University had increased to 67.3 percent. The self-study report articulates several possible explanations for this phenomenon and suggests that some actions recently taken by faculty, including establishment of two new sequences, may resolve the issue. The committee asks faculty to continue monitoring time to degree. If the gap between program and university-wide time-to-degree continues to persist, the committee encourages faculty to identify and implement strategies to reduce it. Individualized plans of study now being developed by students in the proseminar for English majors (ENG 102) could aid faculty in studying and resolving this concern.

Continue to aggressively recruit students to the program while monitoring student retention. In the last decade enrollments in post-secondary humanities programs have declined nationwide. In Illinois, undergraduate English programs have been challenged to recruit and retain students to stabilize enrollments. Due at least in part to implementation of the multi-faceted recruitment plan developed by the Department of English since the last program review, the B.A. in English program has become the largest undergraduate English program among Illinois public universities with respect to enrollment and degrees conferred. The committee commends the program for that accomplishment and recommends sustained recruitment efforts, particularly efforts to recruit students from racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline and at the University. The committee recommends that the program periodically revisit its recruitment goals and strategies at the sequence level. Doing so could help the department continue its recruitment successes and could help the department plan for faculty teaching assignments including coverage of introductory English courses by tenure-line faculty members. The committee also recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention. The first to second year retention rate for the program consistently exceeds the average across all undergraduate programs at the University. The committee encourages the program to continue its efforts to retain first-year students while also monitoring retention of its upper-division students.

Develop and implement a plan for further integrating information fluency instruction into the curriculum and expanding exposure of students to library resources and services. The committee supports the faculty plan to review information fluency needs of students in the program to determine if additional information fluency and research instruction beyond that provided through introductory English courses is warranted. The committee encourages program faculty to work with Milner Library faculty and staff to formalize information fluency outcomes for the program, to map the outcomes to courses across the curriculum, and to integrate assessment of student learning relative to those outcomes into the assessment plan for the program. The committee notes concerns articulated in the self-study report regarding the lack of familiarity among a growing number of incoming undergraduate English students with library resources and services. The committee suggests that program and library faculty and staff consider developing additional co-curricular opportunities designed to familiarize students with the library. The additional exposure to library resources and services could particularly benefit students in the program who are considering careers in library and information science.

Continue efforts to assess student learning and utilize assessment findings to inform program design and implementation. The committee supports faculty plans to continue efforts to assess student learning over the next eight years, to utilize assessment findings to make program improvements if deemed necessary based on the findings, and to document its assessment work, including the rationale for program changes, using the Assessment Archive recently developed by the department. The committee encourages faculty to periodically review the assessment plan for its effectiveness in guiding program evaluation and for its sustainability in light of department resources.