

Section IV: Evidence for Meeting Standards

Assessment 2: Assessment of Content Knowledge in English

English Content Portfolio

1. Description and Use of Assessment:

The English Content Portfolio is our Program's second content assessment in English Language Arts. It is an assessment system that was put into place six years ago (2004) when the English Department ended its Departmental exam for English Education majors. The exam was not only deemed to be too narrow an assessment to incorporate multiple NCTE standards, but the means of the assessment, a paper and pencil timed test, was not deemed to reflect the thoughtful, careful approach to writing and thinking that an English Education major should be able to demonstrate. So, the Department instituted a Content Portfolio requirement for all English Education majors as a way for the English Department to verify that our English teacher candidates have mastered their content, as exhibited in a selected body of work drawn from the papers they have written during their time in the English Department.

The English Content Portfolio requirement asks that English teacher candidates submit (1) Papers demonstrating abilities to read, interpret and analyze a variety of texts, (2) A short essay that qualifies the papers submitted and shows how the papers correspond to the requirements of the portfolio, (3) Evidence of having passed all three required Praxis II exams (in addition to content tests 0041 and 0042, the Principles of Teaching and Learning is required by the State of Rhode Island), and (4) Evidence of having maintained at least a 3.0 in all English coursework. Teacher candidates submit their Content Portfolios to the English Department during their Practicum semester. Teacher candidates are only allowed to proceed to student teaching if they satisfy the Content Portfolio requirements.

Below are the criteria for completing the Content Portfolio requirement. It should be noted that the first requirement, the inclusion of papers from English coursework that demonstrate various strands of NCTE's Standard 3.0, asks that teacher candidates submit papers from their upper-division English coursework (300, 400, and 500-level courses). These upper-level courses in our English education program are the English courses that correspond with most of those NCTE standards that are missing on the Praxis II 0041 and 0042 tests (i.e. ENGL 326/African-American Literature and ENGL 336/Non-Western Literature, ENGL 320/Composition Theory).

English Content Assessment: Portfolio Criteria

The content portfolio for English students (undergraduates, second degree & MAT) must contain:

1. A paper or papers (10-20 pages of writing, total) completed for one or more of your 300/400/500 level English courses that demonstrate/s your abilities in the following areas:

- **Ability to effectively compose insightful analyses of a range of [literary] texts.** (NCTE 3.3 Knowledge of reading processes; 3.5 Knowledge of an extensive range of literature, including adolescent literature; 3.2.1-3.2.4 Knowledge of practices of oral, visual, and written literacy)
- **Ability to identify significant literary and generic elements in texts.** (NCTE 3.3.2 Discover and create meaning from texts; 3.3.3 Use strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts)
- **Understanding of historical and cultural contexts of literature and literary analysis.** (NCTE 3.1.3 Awareness of cultural, political, economic and social forces on language; 3.1.4 Awareness of diversity in language use across cultural groups and different time periods; 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism)
- **Understanding and application of MLA format**
- **Ability to incorporate secondary sources and research materials into literary analysis.** (NCTE 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism; 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding)
- **Ability to write clearly, coherently, and in a well-organized manner.** (NCTE 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding; 3.4.2 Understands how written discourse can influence thought and action)
- **Facility with language, syntax, and the conventions of standard English.** (NCTE 3.1.6 In-depth knowledge of English grammars; 3.1.7 Demonstrate knowledge of syntax; 3.4.3 Understands how written discourse influences thought and action)

You may satisfy this requirement by submitting one paper from one of your 300-500 level courses, or you may satisfy this requirement by submitting more than one paper from one or more courses. If you are submitting more than one paper, you may choose to submit a paper from English 201 or English 202 as part of the 10-20-page requirement, but you may not use work from English 201 and/or English 202 as your entire submission. NOTE: Submit the original paper(s), as returned by your instructor, including the instructor's comments.

2. A brief (1-2 page) cover letter/reflective essay explaining why you think that the work you have submitted meets the criteria outlined below and why you think it reflects your development as an English student. In this short essay, we are asking you to tell us why you chose the paper or papers you have submitted.

Listed below are the criteria by which your writing sample will be evaluated. Tell us how you think your work meets these guidelines; tell us also how it shows something of your development as an English student.

3. Praxis II scores:

PLT (cut score=167)

Content (cut score=160)

Essay (cut score=150)

4. A current Rhode Island College transcript; evidence of an English GPA that is at least a 3.0 (B).

The work that teacher candidates submit in their English Content Portfolio is evaluated by a committee of English faculty. The composition of this scoring committee changes each semester, and prior to each semester's scoring session, members of the committee are trained to use the rubric (below), by the English Department Chair, in a practice scoring session.

Once readers are trained and begin the work of reading and scoring the portfolios, each portfolio score is arrived at using this process: Two readers independently read and score the contents of each portfolio using the rubric below. They then compare their scores and, if they disagree on the assessment (for instance, if one reader scores a portfolio a "satisfactory" and another an "outstanding"), a third reader is asked to review the portfolio and to score it, and then an average score is reached from those three readings.

2. Description of How the Assessment Specifically Aligns with NCTE Content Standards (3.0):

The committee is asked to read the teacher candidate portfolio papers with the following standards in mind. With the exception of (d), each requirement for the Content Portfolio corresponds to one of NCTE's 3.0 standards (see below).

- a) **Ability to effectively compose insightful analysis of a range [literary] texts.** (NCTE 3.3 Knowledge of reading processes; 3.5 Knowledge of an extensive range of literature, including adolescent literature; 3.2.1-3.2.4 Knowledge of practices of oral, visual, and written literacy)
- b) **Ability to identify significant literary and generic elements in texts.** (NCTE 3.3.2 Discover and create meaning from texts; 3.3.3 Use strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts)
- c) **Understanding of historical and cultural contexts of literature and literary analysis.** (NCTE 3.1.3 Awareness of cultural, political, economic and social forces on language; 3.1.4 Awareness of diversity in language use across cultural groups and different time periods; 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism; 3.7.1)

- d) **Understanding and application of MLA format**
- e) **Ability to incorporate secondary sources and research materials into literary analysis.** (NCTE 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism; 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding)
- f) **Ability to write clearly, coherently, and in a well-organized manner.** (NCTE 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding; 3.4.2 Understands how written discourse can influence thought and action)
- g) **Facility with language, syntax, and the conventions of standard English.** (NCTE 3.1.6 In-depth knowledge of English grammars; 3.1.7 Demonstrate knowledge of syntax; 3.4.3 Understands how written discourse influences thought and action)

Scoring Guide for Evaluating the English Content Portfolio:

The portfolio receives one of three scores--Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory.

English Content Portfolio Requirements:	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Outstanding
English GPA	< 3.0	3.0 +	>3.0
Praxis II scores: Content	< 160	160+	>160
Praxis II scores: Essay	< 150	150+	>150
a. Ability to analyze literary texts. (NCTE 3.3 Knowledge of reading processes; 3.5 Knowledge of an extensive range of literature, including adolescent literature)	The writing sample demonstrates an ability to analyze literary texts only superficially, contains misreadings of the literature, or relies on plot summary	The writing sample demonstrates an adequate ability to analyze literary texts, although the analysis may lack depth	The writing sample demonstrates a superior ability to analyze literary texts thoughtfully and in substantial depth
b. Ability to identify important	The writing sample fails to demonstrate	The writing sample demonstrates an	The writing sample demonstrates a

<p>literary and generic elements in texts. (NCTE 3.3.2 Discover and create meaning from texts; 3.3.3 Use strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts)</p>	<p>an adequate ability to identify literary and generic elements of the literature being analyzed</p>	<p>adequate ability to identify some of the literary and generic elements of the literature being analyzed</p>	<p>superior ability to identify the important literary and generic elements of the literature being analyze</p>
<p>c. Understanding of historical and cultural contexts of literature and literary analysis. (NCTE 3.1.3 Awareness of cultural, political, economic and social forces on language; 3.1.4 Awareness of diversity in language use across cultural groups and different time periods; 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism)</p>	<p>The writing sample does not indicate an awareness of the historical and cultural contexts involved in the interpretation of literary texts</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates a familiarity with the historical and cultural contexts involved in the interpretation of literary texts although it may treat them only cursorily</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates an exceptional understanding of the historical and cultural contexts involved in the interpretation of literary texts</p>
<p>d. Understanding and application of MLA format e. Ability to incorporate secondary sources and research materials into literary analysis.</p>	<p>The writing sample fails to demonstrate an ability to incorporate secondary sources and/or research materials into the literary analysis; or it fails to demonstrate an</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates the ability to incorporate secondary sources and/or research materials into the literary analysis; it also demonstrates an adequate</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates an exceptional ability to incorporate appropriate secondary sources and/or research materials into the literary analysis; it also demonstrates</p>

<p>(NCTE 3.5.4 Awareness of a range of works of literary theory and criticism; 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding)</p>	<p>understanding of MLA format</p>	<p>understanding of MLA format, although it may have flaws</p>	<p>mastery of MLA format</p>
<p>f. Ability to write clearly, coherently, and in a well-organized manner. (NCTE 3.4.1 Uses a variety of writing strategies to generate meaning and clarify understanding; 3.4.23 Understands how written discourse can influence thought and action)</p>	<p>The writing sample displays problems with coherence, organization, and/or clarity</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates the ability to write an essay that is in large part clear, coherent, and well-organized, although there may be some flaws</p>	<p>The writing sample demonstrates the ability to write an essay that is consistently clear, coherent, and well-organized</p>
<p>g. Facility with language, syntax, and the conventions of standard English. (NCTE 3.1.6 In-depth knowledge of English grammars; 3.1.7 Demonstrate knowledge of syntax; 3.4.3 Understands how written discourse influences thought)</p>	<p>The writing sample displays significant writing errors involving language, syntax, and/or the conventions of standard written English</p>	<p>The writing sample displays adequate facility with language, syntax, and the conventions of standard written English but may have some flaws</p>	<p>The writing sample displays superior facility with language, syntax, and the conventions of standard written English</p>

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If a teacher candidate’s portfolio is rated “Unsatisfactory” on the first submission, s/he is allowed to revise the portfolio and to resubmit it to the English Department. In the second submission, Teacher candidates have to work on at least one of the following tasks to improve their score: using different papers from English coursework to demonstrate the standards, revising their cover letter so that it provides what is asked, re-taking the Praxis II test/s, and/or taking additional coursework to improve their English GPA. If a teacher candidate’s portfolio is deemed “Unsatisfactory” on the second submission, s/he is counseled out of the English Education program. In the past three years, only one teacher candidate in our program (2%) has been in this predicament, though eight candidates (19%) have had to resubmit their portfolios due to an “Unsatisfactory” rating on the first submission.

Content Portfolio Scores for 4 English education cohorts (2008-2010):

Cohort	Total Content Portfolios Submitted	Satisfactory (first submission)	Outstanding (first submission)	Satisfactory (second submission)	Unsatisfactory after second submission
Fall 2008	7	6	0	1	0
Spring 2009	11	10	0	1	0
Fall 2009	8	4	1	3	0
Spring 2010	16	10	2	3	1
Totals	42	30 (72%)	3 (7%)	8 (19%)	1 (2%)

4. Interpretation of Data as Evidence of Standards Met:

The data for four cohorts’ English Content Portfolios reveals to us that, though 19% of our candidates have to submit their portfolios for a second reading, nearly all of our candidates have successfully completed this Program assessment. We believe that the success rate on this assessment speaks to the strong support that our candidates receive from English faculty and from English Education faculty in preparing their Content Portfolio and in preparing any revisions that are needed for a second submission.

Candidates are not left on their own to struggle with this assessment, nor are they abandoned by faculty if their first submission is not deemed satisfactory.

Our students' success on this assessment is also a tribute to their having mastered the following content standards, as demonstrated through their Praxis II test scores and through their Content Portfolio performance:

- 3.1 (Knowledge of the English Language)
- 3.3 (Knowledge of Reading Processes)
- 3.4 (Knowledge of Different Composing Processes)
- 3.5 (Knowledge of an Extensive Range of Literature):