

## Memorandum

February 15, 2012

To: Aaron Bird, Chair, Assessment Committee

From: John E. McEaney, Doctoral Coordinator, PhD Program in Reading Education

Re: 2012 Assessment Plan Update

When I assumed responsibility as Doctoral Coordinator in August, 2011, I initiated a review of PhD program policies and procedures. My review and subsequent examination of records indicates the assessment plan currently on file for the PhD program was approved by the department faculty and submitted in 1992. The purpose of this memo is to update our assessment plan to bring it into better alignment with program developments and changes put into place since our last plan was approved and submitted.

The Oakland University mission as articulated in the current undergraduate catalog states:

As a state-supported institution of higher education, Oakland University has a three-fold mission. It offers instructional programs of high quality that lead to degrees at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels as well as programs in continuing education; it advances knowledge and promotes the arts through research, scholarship, and creative activity; and it renders significant public service. In all its activities, the university strives to exemplify educational leadership. (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, December 2011)

The PhD program in reading education, as one of OU's instructional programs, is specifically intended to advance knowledge through research and render public service through the interpretation and application of research findings by graduates who assume positions of leadership in the field of literacy education.

The SEHS mission statement is still more specific in articulating our commitment to supporting and promoting collaborative skills that help us build and develop strong partnerships with local school districts, community agencies, and the broader community. Specifically, the mission statement of SEHS states:

The School of Education and Human Services integrates human resource development with counseling and education to prepare collaborative leaders, capable of, and committed to, empowering others and promoting an inclusive society. (*SEHS Web Site*, December 2011)

The mission of the Doctor of Philosophy in Reading Education is to prepare candidates for leadership positions in higher education, industry, public schools, and government institutions who can create, synthesize, integrate, and apply research, theory, and practice in solving problems of literacy and learning. Five specific program objectives support this mission.

### Program Objectives

- I. Broad understanding of issues, and trends in literacy research and practice,
- II. Specialized understanding in a specific domain of literacy research and practice,
- III. Competence in a) designing and b) carrying out a scholarly research study,
- IV. Capacity to communicate research findings in oral and written form,
- V. Capacity for literacy leadership in a technological and multicultural society.

## Learning Outcomes

Each of the program objectives noted above for the PhD Program in Reading Education is operationalized in the form of a specific student learning outcome. Outcomes are observable demonstrations of student behavior or production of artifacts that document achievement of program objectives. Specifically, doctoral students will ...

1. Conduct a broadly based literature review in defining a context for a specific research study and present that review in both oral and written form.
2. Develop a rationale for a specific research study drawing on recently published relevant studies and present that rationale in both oral and written form.
3. Develop a research plan in support of a research study and justify the methods adopted in both oral and written forms prior to (a) and following (b) execution of a study.
4. Effectively communicate research results in both oral and written form.
5. Assume positions of professional responsibility and leadership in literacy studies in the years following graduation.

## Assessment Instruments

The PhD program has adopted three measures that serve to document student progress toward achieving program objectives, two direct measures and one indirect measure. Each assessment measure is described below, with a statement indicating which program objectives are addressed.

### Direct Measure 1: Qualifying Examination

Students in the PhD program are required to demonstrate their breadth and depth of understanding in the field of literacy through written and oral qualifying examinations that are evaluated by a committee of RLA faculty. Students must demonstrate broad understanding of literacy research and practice, specialized understanding in a self-selected domain within literacy, familiarity with research methods, and a capacity for scholarly exposition in both oral and written forms. The qualifying examination committee's approval of the examination work documents the student's performance on outcomes 1, 2, 3a, and 4.

### Direct Measure 2: Dissertation Defense

The dissertation describes the scholarly project in detail, including its strengths and weaknesses and its implications for future scholarly work. This document must follow guidelines established by the Graduate School at Oakland University. The dissertation defense consists of a public presentation by the candidate followed by audience questions; a private discussion with the faculty committee regarding their concerns; a closed committee session in which the dissertation is either approved or not; and a meeting between the candidate and the committee to discuss any required changes. Committee approval of the dissertation serves as a direct measure documenting the candidate's performance in meeting goals 1, 2, 3a, 3b, and 4.

### Indirect Measure 1: Five-year PhD Graduate Follow-up

Every five years, the doctoral coordinator will lead a survey effort to follow up with PhD program graduates from the past five years. PhD graduates will be contacted by email, postal mail, and telephone in order to assess their current professional position(s) and scholarly, teaching and service activities in the field of literacy. Results of the survey will serve as an indirect assessment of student's achievement of objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5.

C: Louis Gallien, Dean, SEHS  
Linda M. Pavonetti, Chair, Department of Reading and language Arts