

## Form E-1-A for Boston College Departments/Programs

### Department/Program Classical Studies

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

Classics majors are expected to exhibit mastery in 3 broad areas:

1. Linguistic knowledge and skills: Students will possess advanced proficiency in at least one ancient language (Greek or Latin) and, preferably, intermediate proficiency in the other.
2. Critical and interpretative skills: Students will be able to write critical or interpretative papers and compose interpretative arguments that pursue a thesis and engage with both primary and secondary materials.
3. Knowledge of the ancient world: Students will exhibit competence in at least two major content areas: a) techniques of literary analysis; b) techniques of artistic analysis; c) the broad outlines of ancient political history, Greek or Roman; d) special problems in ancient social and/or cultural history, e.g. law, religion, philosophy, economy, gender studies.

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your dept major handouts?)

These objectives are published on the Classics Dept. website ([http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/classics/Undergraduate\\_program.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/classics/Undergraduate_program.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?)

We collect samples of written work (i.e. exams and/or papers) completed by majors in classes pertaining to the language, literature, art, or culture of ancient Greece and Rome over the course of their undergraduate careers. Graduating seniors fill out an exit questionnaire that asks them to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their Classics major and how well they feel it prepared them for their post-graduation plans.

- 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 Director of Undergraduate Studies and at least two other members of the department evaluate and interpret the data at the end of each academic year. They report their findings as well as suggest changes to curriculum, if appropriate, to the chair of the department.

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?)

The pandemic played havoc with all of our assessment procedures this year, so these comments rely more heavily than usual on my observations from teaching or working independently with all of our 2020 seniors, most multiple times over their college careers. We graduated 6 Classics majors this year; 2 had begun with the class of 2019, but hit roadblocks in their personal lives. All 6 were double majors in fields (Linguistics, Biology/Pre-Med, Political Science/Pre-Law, and Finance) that represented their primary academic commitment. For these students, their Classics major provided a robust liberal arts training that nurtured their varied talents and interests. Those who came in with strong languages left with their language abilities refined and deepened. Others were perceptive, original literary critics and historical analysts, and it was a pleasure to watch them develop their voice and sharpen their critical faculties over their 4 years at BC. Few came with much experience with material culture, but students who took Gail Hoffman's courses learned visual literacy. All improved their research and writing skills markedly; as one remarked, "the feedback that I received on drafts of my papers were incredibly helpful and even got me excited to continue writing the papers for the advanced classes." And many of these students commented on the academic and personal mentorship they received from Classics faculty and the sense of community they found in the Classics dept. As one student put it, "Even though I was officially a CSOM student, I found the classics department to be my home, and that I always had someone to go to when I would swing by"; the department felt "like a community where I could talk to the professors about things that did not necessarily have to do with classics."

Our chief concerns, as always, are to help students get a rounded education in the ancient world (both language(s) and culture) and to find ways to expand our reach more widely. Our Ancient Civilization minor has been flourishing (after a record 15 students in the class of 2019, we returned to a more typical 6 minors in 2020, with 7 currently in the pipeline for 2021), but we need to find ways to serve more students in the language side of our program.

To that end, we made two new changes last year. First, we added minors in Latin and ancient Greek, with the aim of enticing strong language students to continue with coursework at the advanced level without the commitment of a full major. We have five declared Latin minor so far, up from one last year; we expect that the numbers will continue to rise as word gets out. Those 5 are roughly evenly divided between students for whom the Latin minor offers justification for continuing on into advanced coursework, and those for whom it provides an off-ramp from a full Classics major. As a result, it may be a wash for us in terms of enrollments, but it is a gain for the students in terms of flexibility.

Second, in Spring 2019 we launched an after-school Latin program called Aequora at Nativity Prep Middle School in Jamaica Plain. This program, started by the Paideia Institute, uses a fun, games-based, literacy-focused curriculum to teach Latin and Roman culture, especially to under-served minority populations. Our goals for our own students were 1) to provide teaching experience for advanced students considering teaching careers, and 2) to offer students in our lower-level Latin classes an exciting way to engage with and take ownership of their Latin learning. The initial pilot worked exactly as we intended: the senior Classics major who coordinated the program described it as "life-changing," and we developed a dedicated, high-morale cadre of younger advanced- and intermediate-level student volunteers, all of whom are planning to continue with the program and as Classics majors or minors. At its current scale the program can accommodate only a small fraction of our Latin students, so its impact on retention and enrollments will be limited, but even a fairly modest increase in retention and morale in our language

courses could make a big difference. Unfortunately, the COVID crisis terminated the program midway through Spring 2020, and it will remain on hold in Fall 2020.

In the longer term, after our last program review, we changed the requirements for our major to require students to take more courses on ancient history and culture, and to allow elementary Greek to count toward the Classics major. Our goals were to make the Classics major more flexible and accessible to students who did not study Greek or Latin in high school, to encourage majors to pursue both classical languages at least to the intermediate level, and to have majors develop broader competence in Greek and Roman history and culture. A second change, starting in AY17, was to expand our Core offerings, so that Classics now offers courses in 3 different parts of the Core (Fine Arts, Literature, and History). The primary goal of that change was to increase our contributions to the Core curriculum and expose a wider population to the study of Classics, but a secondary benefit may be to make it easier for students to fit a Classics major into their schedule.

Too few Classics majors graduate each year to permit robust analysis. In the last 6 years, 58% (14/24) of our graduating seniors took at least one semester of ancient Greek; 8 of 24 reached the advanced level in both Latin and Greek. We would like to see more Classics majors take both Greek and Latin, but that goal is in tension with our desire for students to take a wide range of Civilization courses in order to acquire a broad basic knowledge of the ancient world. On the latter front, our students do now tend to graduate with a somewhat wider array of coursework in ancient history, art, culture, etc., but what they've covered remains rather eclectic. We would love to add a 3000-level capstone Civilization course for our majors, but at present numbers that seems impractical. Another suggestion occasionally floated by faculty and students, including one of this year's graduates, is an intro-level Civilization course that would provide a broad overview of the ancient world for majors and minors, ideally early in a student's Classics career. That is also an appealing idea, and good models exist at other institutions (I myself contributed to such a course at Skidmore College), but small numbers and the requirement-heavy schedules of most BC students, especially in their first two years, again present obstacles.

Our goal of making the Classics major more accessible to those without high school Latin or Greek has had mixed success. 2017 was a high-water mark: 3 of our 5 majors entered college with no Latin or Greek at all, and started at the Intermediate level. No general conclusions can be drawn from this, and our 2018, 2019, and 5 of 6 2020 graduates had all begun one or both languages in high school, but it does suggest that we have made it easier for students to switch into the Classics major midstream, and to add Classics as a second major. Even so, "walk-on" Classics majors face significant barriers to entry, and often need to do a summer language program to accelerate their progress toward advanced language coursework.

As we have rebuilt our FT faculty, we have made it a high priority to find faculty who could add innovative and compelling courses on classical civilization to our major and/or the Core curriculum, as well as strong language courses at every level. More diverse course offerings is something our graduating seniors consistently request, and we have taken important steps toward that goal. Recent additions include courses on the City of Rome, Roman Spectacles, Multiculturalism in the Roman Empire, Greeks and Barbarians, Death & Dying in Ancient Greece, Ancient Comedy, Beast Literature, and Ancient Medicine.

Beginning in fall 2014, we added a new "Advanced Intermediate" Latin course. This course was designed for entering students whose high school Latin preparation placed them beyond Intermediate Latin I, but not at the right level to begin Advanced Latin immediately (e.g. those who scored a 3 on the AP Latin exam), and for incoming students who have the language skills but not the maturity for advanced coursework. Secondarily, that course serves students who have come through our Intermediate Latin sequence, but are not quite ready to move on to Advanced Latin; two such students took the class in F18

and have now successfully completed an advanced course. The goal was to raise the level of our advanced courses by offering weaker students an option better suited to their level. Enrollment in Advanced Intermediate Latin has risen modestly but steadily in the last few years, from 3 (F16) to 5 (F17) to 7 (F18), and the yield for the major is high. Of the 4 students (3 + 1 auditor) who took the course in F16, 2 continued into Advanced Latin and the Classics major or minor. Of this year's graduating seniors, two started with this course. At the same time, we've been able to reduce the time spent on remediation in advanced Latin classes. We feel that this course is meeting an important need.

The multi-year revision of our Elementary Latin courses, spearheaded by Asst. Prof. of the Practice Mark Thatcher, seems to have reached a successful conclusion for the present. We spent the last few years trying out different elementary Latin textbooks in the hope of finding one that would be both more accessible and better preparation for intermediate-level courses. After much experimentation, we have landed on a textbook that meets those goals, at least for most students. Enrollment continues to oscillate, but student satisfaction as expressed on evaluations is fairly high. Another long-standing goal is to add a fourth hour for language drill. In AY18 and 19, we took advantage of higher than usual graduate student yield to pilot first an optional drill section for the elementary Latin courses, then to hire a tutor for one-on-one sessions with struggling students. We continue to look for more effective ways to provide support for students outside class.

Even at its small size, the Classics major serves a fairly diverse constituency, which can differ widely between cohorts. In some years (e.g. 2015), most of our graduates go on toward Classics-related careers; in others (e.g. 2016), the bulk of our majors are double majors for whom the other major represents their main career aspiration. For those students, Classics offers a rigorous and varied liberal arts training that supplements mostly STEM and social science majors. In 2017, we had a mix: of our 5 graduates, 1 is now in med school, 1 in conservatory for conducting, 1 pursuing a career in a rock band, while 2 others went on to post-baccalaureate programs in Classics; of those, one is now pursuing a PhD in Classics and the other is applying to HS teaching jobs. In 2018, 1 graduate entered Notre Dame's ACE Teaching Fellows program; the other is in law school. Our 2019 graduate is getting an MA in Classics from the University of Florida, heading toward K-12 teaching. Our 2020 graduates fall entirely into the second category: all 6 are pursuing careers or further schooling outside Classics: they headed variously for an Army base in Germany, a large investment bank, medical school, and law school. The strong liberal arts character and flexibility of our major enables us to equip a wide variety of students well for their post-graduation aims.

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

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