Guidelines for Completing the School of Letters Assessment Instrument.

If you are supervising a student who is earning his or her final credits in the School of Letters, whether in a thesis or in a summer course, you will be asked to complete a form that invites a numerical assessment of that student’s command of skills and areas of knowledge that are specified in the learning goals for his or her program. Your assessment will be based on work the student completes for you while earning those final credits, either the thesis or a paper completed in a summer class. The assessment you offer is meant to measure not only what the student has learned from you but the accumulated knowledge and skill acquired over his or her entire experience in the School of Letters.

For the M.A. program, the learning goals for graduates are these:

1. They should be able to write clear, professional English prose.
2. They should be familiar with the conventions of literary criticism, including its characteristic terminology.
3. They should be sufficiently familiar with the history of literature in English to be able to place individual works in historical context.
4. They should be able to read an individual literary text closely, with due attention to both content and technique.
5. They should be able to identify and locate published scholarship and criticism with which to supplement their reading of a text, and to incorporate the insights gained from these sources into that reading.
6. They should be able to combine all these skills in a convincing, well-developed argument about the meaning of a literary work.

For the M.F.A. program, the learning goals for graduates are these:

1. They should develop a rich and articulate understanding of the formal elements of the genre in which they write.
2. They should acquire sufficient knowledge of the history and traditions of that genre to be able to place their own work in relation to these.
3. They should develop and employ techniques of intensive revision.
4. They should be able to produce polished literary work of publishable quality.
5. They should be able to articulate verbally the purposes of their work, accounting for their artistic choices and explaining the work’s place both within its genre and within their own developing craft.

As you complete these forms, please bear in mind that the assessment you offer will be used only to help the School of Letters evaluate its own effectiveness. It will not affect a student’s grade, transcript, or eligibility for graduation. The information we collect is analyzed in the aggregate. Accordingly, please be as frank as you can be, recognizing that accurate evaluations, whether high or low, are the most useful.