

MIC English Program Report December 2013

Members of the English faculty met on November 28, 2013 to discuss ways in which the English program could be improved.

Prompting this meeting was the recent adoption of curricular changes adding reading classes in each of the first three semesters beginning in 2015. With the addition of these classes, and with the transfer of some objectives out of the English classes and into the Academic Writing classes, space was created for the coordinated treatment of other aspects of language development in the English classes.

At our meeting, we first broke into small groups to brainstorm whether we felt changes to the current program would be beneficial, and if so, what kinds of changes might be desirable. We then came back together and shared ideas.

No decisions were made regarding program changes during the meeting. However, many suggestions were made, and it appeared that there was unanimous support for adding a coordinated speaking and listening component to the program and for revising the grammar objectives program currently in place in the English classes.

After the meeting, the results of this brainstorming session were compiled and shared to Google Drive (Appendix), and we agreed to continue the process of reflection and brainstorming throughout the winter break. In addition, a number of working groups were started, and a timetable for program revision was put in place. Information about each of those is outlined below. More details about the 2014 spring and fall semesters will be added over time.

The overall goal of these activities is to make sure that reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as learner development, are all addressed in a coordinated way in order to effectively meet the needs of MIC students.

Tentative Schedule of English Program Development

December 2013

- **Working group determines list of readings on reading** (Mick, Tim). Tim is the contact person for this group.

The idea here is that once readings are set, we can all begin bringing ourselves up to date with reading pedagogy.

January 2014

- **Working group drafts mission statement** (Julia, Mick, Phil). Julia is the contact person for this group.

The idea here is to come up with a shared vision/statement of what our basic purpose as a program is in the hope that we will have it to refer back to if uncertainties arise later on in the process.

February 2014

- **Working group drafts statement of curricular principles** (Johanna, Anne, George). Johanna is the contact person for this group.

This might be viewed as an extension of the mission statement. The idea here is to state the basic principles upon which we plan to base our revised curriculum. This

could be based on Nation's four strands, for example, or something different. Again, having such a statement in place will be helpful in considering many of the ideas we brainstormed recently. For instance, should we adopt an extensive listening component to the program? A set of principles could help us with questions like that.

March 2014

- **Working group on rubric for assessment in academic writing classes** (Iain, Ed). Iain is the contact person for this group.

This group will create or find a rubric to be used for assessment in the academic writing classes and will trial this rubric with samples of writing that were collected in previous semesters.

- Monday, March 3, 1 pm - Meeting to discuss, possibly revise, and possibly adopt mission statement and curricular principles statement.
- Monday, March 10, 1 pm - Meeting to discuss first group of readings on reading.
- Monday, March 17, 1 pm - Meeting to discuss second group of readings on reading.

Spring Semester 2014

- We continue to meet on a regular basis (maybe three or four times during the semester) to discuss readings and to refine and evaluate the list of ideas from our brainstorming.
- Possibly collect baseline data on reading comprehension and reading attitudes.
- Possibly conduct needs analysis on reading, listening, and speaking.

Summer 2014

Keeping in mind that we will have a very long summer break this year, we could possibly schedule some initial work on curricular revision during this time.

Fall 2014

During the fall, many of us have lighter teaching loads, so the bulk of the work on revising the curriculum is tentatively scheduled here. This would include:

- deciding upon objectives for each course
- deciding whether we want to have any shared activities across all sections of the same class (e.g., journals in writing classes, extensive listening)
- developing forms of assessment
- compiling packets of readings for reading courses

Ongoing

- **Working group on vocabulary** (Phil, Tim, Brendan). Phil is the contact person for this if you have ideas or if you would like to work on this group.

This group is somewhat loosely defined at the moment. Among other things, they will take a look at the various word lists out there and recommend one for our use; they might consult with the assessment group regarding testing of vocab. Later, they would probably play a role in the discussion of course objectives.

- **Working group on assessment** (Jason, Tim). Jason is the contact person for this group.

This group will initially focus on reading assessment, but they may also work on assessment of the other skills. Because we may want baseline data on reading before the new courses go into effect, some work will probably be done this winter.

- **Working group on the ARC/learner development** (Tim, Phil, Monica, Johanna).

The idea here is to develop a plan for (a) promoting the development of learner autonomy throughout our program and (b) integrating the ARC with the existing curriculum.

Appendix

Compilation of Ideas from Brainstorming Session
English Faculty Meeting
November 28, 2013

I. Meta-Level

We could possibly...

- make sure that the objectives for all classes are broadly shared so that we can take advantage of opportunities to review/recycle

II. The Classes

A. Overall, the program could possibly...

- move toward more integration of skills across classes
 - speaking could be included in all classes
 - writing could be used to support speaking
 - reading could be used to support writing
 - **vocabulary which we want students to learn could be distributed across program classes**
- have an orientation unit (across the classes)
- have more can-do statements in exit-criteria

B. The **English** class could possibly...

- lose clause-level objectives
- have fewer grammar objectives to allow time for communication
- have listening objectives
 - have listening fluency/extensive listening activities
 - have a listening-skill-development component
- have speaking objectives
 - have speaking fluency activities
 - **have objectives related to classroom and on-campus functions**
 - have an assessment which includes speaking
 - could include picture prompts
 - could be facilitated with simultaneous recording of speaking tasks via smart phones
- be more oriented toward speaking in the higher levels, and more oriented toward grammar in the lower levels:
- have semesterly assessment and advancement (instead of quarterly)

C. The **Writing** class could possibly...

- gain clause-level objectives

- be integrated thematically with the reading course
 - vocabulary and grammar could be mutually reinforced
- have required free-writing or journaling
- have speaking objectives and be called a “productive skills” class
- have short timed readings in each class; these readings would be well-structured paragraphs (or essays) written with appropriately easy language for timed readings

D. The **Reading** class could possibly...

- be coordinated with extensive listening (e.g., CDs for graded readers)
- take on some grammar objectives
- use vocabulary knowledge as the basis for placement
- have the same reading skills targeted across all levels (rather than separate skills at each level) to promote recycling of skills

III. Study Abroad

Study abroad could possibly...

- have more guidance for the independent research project

IV. Other Educational Opportunities

There could possibly be...

- a workshop for note-taking skills