

Part I. General Information

Program(s) Discussed:	Philosophy Department
Current Semester:	Spring 2016
Date of Assessment Meeting(s):	February 1, 2016
Participants in Assessment Meeting(s):	Sharon Kaye, Earl Spurgin, Tamba Nlandu, Diana Taylor, Deniz Durmus

All Annual Assessment Reports are available to the appropriate Associate Dean, Dean, and the Provost, as well as to other administrators for institutional effectiveness and accreditation purposes. Please indicate the degree to which your program would like this information more widely shared.

On-Campus Users

- Freely available
- Available upon request
- Unavailable

Off-Campus Users

- Freely available
- Available upon request
- Unavailable

Part II. Assessment Process

Prompt: In one or two paragraphs, describe your assessment process. Did you gather data on all of your program's student learning goals? If not, which student learning goals did you measure in this assessment cycle? What tools did you use to attempt to measure student learning? Where and how were they administered? Who scored them?

This year, the Philosophy Department decided to gather data on its program by assessing PL450, the Seminar, because it is the only course required of majors. Four different instructors taught the seminar (two in the spring of 2015 and two in the fall of 2015). Each instructor scored his or her own students after grading the assignment.

Each seminar concerned a different topic. Of our four departmental learning goals, each instructor assessed the goals that were most relevant for his/her topic. Every instructor assessed goals #1 and #2; two instructors assessed goal #3; and one instructor assessed goal #4. All instructors used a rubric with three or four dimensions tailored to their topics and recorded their results manually.

Part III. Findings

Prompt: Along with this report, please submit the data charts the program used during the assessment meeting. Describe, in words, what your program learned about student learning during this assessment cycle. What were your strengths? In what ways did students fail to meet the goals you set for them?

The most significant strength we found was the ability to identify contentious issues and explain why it matters for philosophy that we resolve them. Overall, our students are relatively good at demonstrating that they understand philosophical concepts and theories.

The most important weakness we found was critical analysis. Our students have difficulty making an original argument for or against a position. We are also concerned about a deficit in foundational competency (i.e., from prior courses). We noted that there may be a connection between these two

weaknesses: it is difficult to evaluate a position if it presupposes concepts and theories that were never studied.

Name(s) of file(s) containing data charts: Spurgin Chart; Fitzpatrick Chart; Ortega Chart; Eng Chart

Part IV. Planned Changes to the Assessment System

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your assessment system? (Questions to consider include: 1) Do your measures and processes provide useful data with a reasonable amount of effort? and 2) Are your measures reliable, valid, and sufficient?) On which student learning goals do you plan to focus your attention during the next assessment cycle? Do you need to implement additional formative assessment tools to better understand some of your findings? If so, describe those here.

All four assessors were concerned about the size of their samples. Each seminar typically has around 10 students, which is not enough to produce results of statistical significance. In the interest of creating a larger pool for analysis, we would like to standardize our rubrics next year.

Instead of individualizing dimensions for each course, we would like all seminar instructors to use a rubric with the same four dimensions, namely, the departmental learning goals. For those learning goals that a course does not address, the instructor should simply enter N/A. The instructors should tailor the departmental learning goals to their courses on their syllabi but not on their rubrics.

Moreover, instructors should fill out and submit the rubrics on Canvas so that the data can be aggregated before the annual assessment meeting. This will eliminate the need for instructors to write individual reports based on too few students. Instead, we will generate a chart based on the aggregate data and submit only one aggregate report.

Part V. Planned Changes to the Program in Response to Data

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your program in response to what you now know about student learning? (Possibilities include changes to learning goals, pedagogy, assignments in particular classes, activities, and curricular requirements and/or structure.) What is your anticipated timeline for both implementation and assessment of the planned changes?

The deficit in foundational competency (and hence, the failure in critical analysis) should be addressed by introducing greater structure into our major. If we could identify specific prerequisites for 450, then we would know what the students had already studied and be in a better position to build on that knowledge. This would require a change to the Undergraduate Bulletin, which is revised every three years.

One problem with this plan is that prerequisites would further reduce enrollment in seminars. It may be wiser, therefore, to institute a prerequisite comprising a range of courses. The department will continue to discuss this option with the goal of being ready to make a change in two years when the Bulletin is revised.