

## Part 1. General Information

Program(s) Discussed:	Philosophy Department Major and Minor
Current Semester:	Spring 2018
Date of Assessment Meeting(s):	February 9, 2018
Participants in Assessment Meeting(s):	Earl Spurgin, Michael Eng, Simon Fitzpatrick, Tamba Nlandu, Deniz Durmus, Patrick Mooney, Sharon Kaye

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 2. Assessment Process

### 2A. Learning Goals

*Prompt:* Paste your program learning goals here, then, address the following questions in a sentence or two: 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?

1. Our students will write and speak knowledgeably about central aspects of and problems within the history of philosophy, as well as about philosophy's major historical figures.
2. Our students will develop the skills necessary to critically evaluate arguments and evidence.
3. Our students will understand the relationship between philosophy and other academic disciplines.
4. Our students will develop the skills necessary to become critically engaged citizens.

We gathered data on all of these student learning goals.

### 2B. Measuring Learning

*Prompt:* In one or two paragraphs, describe your assessment process. What tools did you use to attempt to measure student learning? Where and how were they administered? Who scored them?

This year we gathered data from both seminars concerning our four departmental learning goals. We created an aggregate graph showing four levels of achievement. The assessments were administered and scored by the two instructors of the courses.

## Part 3. Findings

*Prompt:* 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? Along with this report, please submit the data charts the program used during the assessment meeting.

Our Strengths

The stacked graph indicates that we are doing very well over all, especially with regard to three of the learning goals: writing and speaking knowledgeably, understanding the relationship between disciplines, and becoming critically engaged citizens. We feel this accurately reflects the Philosophy Department's excellent service to the core curriculum.

#### Our Weaknesses

However, we are not serving our own majors as well as we are serving other departments' majors. The learning goal "critical analysis," which scored lowest, is the most relevant to philosophical competence. In particular, we all agreed that our students are not as adept as they should be at generating objections and responses to their and others' arguments.

*Name(s) of file(s) containing data charts:*

PL Seminar Data 2017-2018

## Part 4. Planned Changes to the Assessment System

### 4A. 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.

The stacked graph produced by our written assessment shows a great deal of success. Our discussion of the same students, however, revealed a great deal of dissatisfaction not reflected in the stacked graph. The reason for this is that instructors are scoring the written assessment according to a lowered expectation based on the fact that our students are lacking in some foundational training. (We discussed this lack of foundational training in our past two annual assessments.)

When we think of what our students' accomplished without foundational training, we are impressed. But when we think of what they should be accomplishing with foundational training, we are disappointed.

So, next year, we should be sure to score the assessment in accordance with what our students should be accomplishing with foundational training. This will more accurately reflect our dissatisfaction with the current lack of foundational training and validate our effort to reinstate it. (See below.)

### 4B. 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?

We need to reinstate foundational training. We believe this will best be accomplished through a "Methods Course" for majors. Our majors would be required to take this course the first semester following their declaring a philosophy major and prior to taking the seminar. This way the seminar will not have to bear the burden of all three of the core assessment requirements (additional writing, oral presentation, and capstone). Our Methods Course would cover additional writing and oral presentation so that the seminar can focus on capstone only.

Michael Eng already acquired a book on Philosophical Methods and has been experimenting with some of its techniques in his courses. He will work with Deniz Durmus to generate a "Methods Course Syllabus Framework" by the end of spring semester 2018. After the entire department has provided input on it, we will send it to the deans along with a request that they allow a Methods

Course to be included in the next Bulletin (due Fall 2018). Todd Bruce will supply data about our seat counts over the past few years in order to show that we can afford to create a new low-enrollment course.

## **Part 5. Institutional Assessment Committee Interactions**

### **5A. Feedback from IAC**

*Prompt:* Briefly summarize the feedback you received from the Institutional Assessment Committee about your last report.

The IAC approved our last year's assessment with enthusiasm. They endorsed our concern about foundational training. They also recommended standardizing our assessment rubric.

### **5B. Response to Feedback**

*Prompt:* Briefly describe how your program has made use of the feedback.

We standardized our assessment rubric, making our meeting much more efficient. We also spoke to the deans about creating a Methods Course and about having a smaller classroom in which to hold the Methods Course and the Seminar. The deans expressed the view that the university cannot right now afford to be creating new low-enrollment courses. However, the IAC's endorsement of our concern for foundational training gave us the momentum we needed to create the action plan outlined in 4B, above.

### **5C. Request for Feedback**

*Prompt:* Do you have questions or concerns you would like the IAC or the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to address? NO.

## **Part 6. Evidence**

### **6A. Of Changes**

*Prompt:* Look at previous Annual Assessment Reports to see what changes that the program planned to make at that time. If the changes have been made, please submit evidence of the change (department meeting minutes, syllabi or Bulletin pages from before and after the change). If you have decided to not make change, please provide your rationale.

We discussed the problem with foundational training in past reports. It started as a vague concern, and has become more focused and urgent over the last two years. We have not attempted a solution yet for two reasons: (1) The change in the core from three required philosophy courses to two has had many ramifications. We felt we needed to wait for that change to stabilize before making any major adjustments to our major. (2) We knew we could not have a solution in place in time for the last Bulletin. Now that we have arrived at an action step (a new "Methods Course"), we can take steps to introduce it in the next Bulletin.

### **6B. of Impact of Changes**

*Prompt:* Consider the changes reported in Part VI of this and previous reports. What impact has the change had? When the impact of the changes has been assessed, discuss whether changes have had the intended impact and how you know. If the change is too recent or assessment is ongoing, you may wait for a future report.

We will wait for a future report to assess the impact of the new Methods Course.

### **6C. Academic Program Review Action Plan Update**

*Prompt:* If your program has completed an Academic Program Review since 2011, please review your Action Plan from your most recent Academic Program Review, and add a column indicating the progress made on each item. Attach your update to this report.

Please see attached.