

PHILOSOPHY MAJOR AND MINOR AGGREGATE REPORT

ASSESSMENT REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 – 2019 REPORT DUE DATE: 11/01/2019

- **Who should submit the report? – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), as well as graduate and non-degree granting certificate programs of the College of Arts and Sciences.**
- **Programs can combine assessment reports for a major and a minor program into one aggregate report as long as the mission statements, program learning outcome(s) evaluated, methodology applied to each, and the results are clearly delineated in separate sections.**
- **Undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs must submit separate reports**
- **It is recommended that each assessment report not exceed 10 pages. Additional materials (optional) can be added as appendices.**
- **A curricular map should be submitted along with each assessment report (we suggest that the curricular map should be informed by recent assessment outcomes).**

Some useful contacts:

1. Prof. Alexandra Amati, FDCD, Arts – adamati@usfca.edu
2. Prof. John Lendvay, FDCD, Sciences – lendvay@usfca.edu
3. Prof. Mark Meritt, FDCD, Humanities – meritt@usfca.edu
4. Prof. Michael Jonas, FDCD, Social Sciences – mrjonas@usfca.edu
5. Prof. Suparna Chakraborty, AD Academic Effectiveness – schakraborty2@usfca.edu

Academic Effectiveness Annual Assessment Resource Page:

<https://myusf.usfca.edu/arts-sciences/faculty-resources/academic-effectiveness/assessment>

Email to submit the report: assessment_cas@usfca.edu

**Important: Please write the name of your program or department in the subject line.
For example: FineArts_Major (if you decide to submit a separate report for major and minor); FineArts_Aggregate (when submitting an aggregate report)**

I. LOGISTICS

1. Marjolein Oele, Chair of the Philosophy Department; moele@usfca.edu
2. This is an aggregate report.
3. No changes have been made to the curricular map (see separate attachment)

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state "Yes" or "No." Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.**

No Changes have been made to the Program Mission Statement

Current Mission Statement of the Philosophy Major:

The mission of the B.A. in Philosophy degree program is to provide students with an excellent grounding in the fundamental subjects, key movements, and central figures in the history of philosophy and in ethics. We emphasize the development of superior reading, writing, critical thinking, and logic. We prepare students for a wide variety of careers, including entry into various postgraduate and professional degree programs. Our students and faculty are diverse. Consonant with the University's mission, the department educates men and women for others.

Current Mission Statement of the Philosophy Minor:

The mission of the Minor in Philosophy degree program is to provide students with an excellent grounding in the fundamental subjects, key movements, and central figures in the history of philosophy and in ethics. We emphasize the development of superior reading, writing, and critical thinking. Our students and faculty are diverse. Consonant with the University's mission, the department educates men and women for others.

2. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

Note: Major revisions in the program learning outcomes need to go through the College Curriculum Committee (contact: Professor Joshua Gamson, gamson@usfca.edu). Minor editorial changes are not required to go through the College Curriculum Committee.

No Changes have been made to the PLO’s since the last assessment cycle in October 2018.

Current PLO’s for the Major:

- 1) Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major ancient, medieval, modern, and moral philosophers.
- 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
- 3) Students develop philosophical arguments using formal and informal methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

Current PLO’s for the Minor:

- 1) Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major philosophers.
- 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
- 3) Students develop philosophical arguments using methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

3. Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2018-2019?

Since we worked on our responses to the Core D1 and core D3 reports as whole, we indirectly assessed all program learning outcomes (see curricular map) .

III. METHODOLOGY

Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

For example, “the department used questions that were inputted in the final examination pertaining directly to the <said PLO>. An independent group of faculty (not teaching the course) then evaluated the responses to the questions and gave the students a grade for responses to those questions.”

Important Note – WSCUC advises us to use “direct methods” which relate to a direct evaluation of a student work product. “Indirect methods” like exit interviews or student surveys can be used only as additional complements to a direct method.

For any program with fewer than 10 students: If you currently have fewer than 10 students in your program (rendering your statistical analysis biased due to too few data points), it is fine to describe a multi-year data collection strategy here. It would be important to remember that every 3 years, we would expect you to have enough data to conduct a meaningful analysis.

Important: *Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.*

In Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, the Philosophy Department proceeded in indirect assessment of its PLO’s, by reviewing the results of the core D1 and core D3 reports.

IV. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

IV. What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

This section is for you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:

- a. how well students mastered the outcome at the level they were intended to,
- b. any trends noticed over the past few assessment cycles, and
- c. the levels at which students mastered the outcome based on the rubric used.

To address this, among many other options, one option is to use a table showing the distribution, for example:

Level	Percentage of Students
Complete Mastery of the outcome	8.7%
Mastered the outcome in most parts	20.3%

Mastered some parts of the outcome	66%
Did not master the outcome at the level intended	5%

In Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, the Philosophy Department proceeded in indirect assessment of its PLO's, by reviewing the results of the core D1 and core D3 reports (see the curricular map in terms of how D1 and D3 courses map onto our PLO's).

The way we proceeded is the following:

1. In Fall 2018, we reviewed the core D1 report. Since this report only concerns the Philosophy Department, we were able to use the results of this report to think through our core D1 learning outcomes, as well as our PLO's. We wrote our findings in a report submitted to the CAC (Core Advisory Committee), and we also held a Pedagogy Workshop (in Spring 2019) to ensure and discuss alignment of core D1 learning outcomes as expressed in assignments.

2. In Spring 2019, we reviewed the core D3 report. Since this report pertains to both THRS and PHIL, we asked for additional information that pertained to only PHIL courses. We wrote our findings in a report submitted to the CAC (Core Advisory Committee).

In assessing the core D1 and core D3 assessment reports, all PLO's were clearly in sight. For instance, as we thought through issues of a) critical thinking, and b) the formulations of the core learning outcomes, the central building-blocks of our program came into view, which have to do with developing philosophical arguments (PLO # 3) and writing historical and argumentative essays (PLO #2) and with identifying philosophical themes (PLO #1).

To repeat, the PLO's are:

Current PLO's for the Major:

- 1) Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major ancient, medieval, modern, and moral philosophers.
- 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
- 3) Students develop philosophical arguments using formal and informal methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

Current PLO's for the Minor:

- 1) Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major philosophers.
- 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
- 3) Students develop philosophical arguments using methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

In our response to the D1 report, we concluded the following:

(a) Based on the report, the Department sees the value of thinking about its objectives for D1-, and welcomes the opportunity to think through its curriculum, its assignments, etc.

(b) The department sees the need to emphasize the issue of critical assessment (Core D1 learning outcome #4) . Since we find this an especially important core learning outcome for our D1- courses, we think that we need to address this through pedagogy and by emphasizing its importance in our assignments. We held a pedagogy workshop to address this in Spring 2019.

(c) The Department sees the need 1) to design better rubrics, and 2) to sharpen the language of its first Core D1- Learning Outcome. The Philosophy Department needs a bit more time to discuss, and decide, between options A and B.

In our response to the D3 report, we concluded the following:

(a) Based on the report, the Department sees the value of thinking about its objectives for D3, and welcomes the opportunity to think through its curriculum, its assignments, etc.

(b) With regard to HOLG Criterion #1 (“Identifies key ethical theories, concepts, or issues”) we are glad that the performance for this criterion was solid.

- Secondly, with regard to HOLG Criterion #2 (“Explains significance of theories, concepts, or issues, and their inter-relation”), we think the language of this criterion does not adequately manage to capture what we aim for in our learning outcomes.

- Thirdly, we have reflected on the issue of selection of works to be used for assessment. We have wondered whether all works selected are proper fits to meet the 7 (!) learning outcomes of D3. Also, as raters of the workshops indicated, it is sometimes hard to assess papers without being aware of the particular prompt that is being answered. In what way does this selection process and the absence of prompts influence the results?

- Fourthly, similar to our response to the Core D1-assessment report, the department sees the need to emphasize the issue of critical assessment (Core D3 learning outcome # 4; HOLG criterion # 5). Since we find this an especially important core learning outcome for our D3-courses (similar to D1) we think that we need to address this through pedagogy and by emphasizing its importance in our assignments. As for the timeline, we held a pedagogy workshop for all PT and FT Philosophy faculty in Spring 2019 regarding the importance of emphasizing critical thinking for our courses and our assignments. We plan to build upon the message of that workshop to ensure the department’s courses are aligned well to achieve this learning outcome.

(c) The Department sees the need 1) to design better rubrics, 2) to make more precise the language of D3 learning outcomes to ensure clarity of their meaning and to effectively achieve them through pedagogy, 3) to possibly reconsider the number of learning outcomes for the sake of clarity and teaching effectiveness.

V. CLOSING THE LOOP

Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term

planning that your department/program is considering and does not require that any changes need to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

After completing the assessment cycle of the past few years of (a) reviewing each PLO of the major and minor (through both indirect and direct assessment) and (b) reviewing both D1 and D3 core learning outcomes through core assessment, the philosophy department sees the value of offering indirect assessment from hereon out for the next year(s), monitoring the major and minor, our course offerings, aligning syllabi, etc. This proposed period of indirect assessment would offer us the opportunity to reflect on the current state of the major and minor through bi-annual discussions. Additionally, since our APR is coming up in F20 and we are currently writing our self-report, we anticipate such deep reflection to yield further ideas regarding future years of assessment.

What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2017-2018) How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?

Feedback:

On March 7, 2019 the Department received the following email with feedback sent by Mark Meritt, Faculty Director of Curriculum Development, Humanities

“Program Information: Complete contact information is clearly provided.

Program Learning Outcomes and Mission Statement: Mission statements for the Philosophy major and minor are distinct. Each statement communicates clearly and concisely the goals and values of the program, and each statement is clearly aligned with the university’s broader mission. Program learning outcomes for the major and the minor are also distinct. Both lists of outcomes clearly describe the knowledge students should gain in the respective programs.

Assessment Methods: Faculty in the Philosophy department chose to assess a program learning outcome common to both majors and minors (#2: Students write historical and argumentative essays on philosophical issues), as well as to assess how well the course (PHIL 315, required for majors and minors) from which samples were taken aligns with all program outcomes (as well as core D3 outcomes). The assessment process was careful and well designed. For direct assessment, faculty selected sample final papers (including work by both majors and minors) from PHIL 315 that addressed the outcome selected. Before scoring student work, faculty tested the rubric to be used and calibrated their scoring practices through discussion of scoring. Each student work product was scored by three different faculty members. All of the above practices helped to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment process. The syllabus for PHIL 315 was checked for alignment of course outcomes and assignments with program outcomes.

Assessment Results and Closing the Loop: Indirect assessment results confirm that a course required for majors and minors (PHIL 315) aligns (in its course outcomes and assignments) with program learning outcomes for both the major and the minor. Also, direct assessment results provide strong evidence that a majority of both majors and

minors in Philosophy are meeting PLO #2. Philosophy has thus used the assessment process to confirm the overall effectiveness of its curriculum in meeting one of its outcomes (for both majors and minors). The report indicates plans to revise the rubric used in assessment. Such revisions might help the program build upon this already thoughtful assessment. For example, perhaps a more detailed rubric or an analytic one (measuring different elements or components of the task assessed) could help the program determine possible areas for improvement even of acceptable work (e. g., students writing generally sound arguments displaying understanding of concepts might improve documentation of sources, grammar/syntax, or organization). Whatever possible refinements Philosophy undertakes, the department has conducted a thoughtful and well conceived assessment process providing valid evidence of student learning. *Summary Comments:* Philosophy has directly and indirectly assessed student achievement of a program learning outcome shared by its major and minor. Evidence indicates that students are meeting standards set for the outcome and that required coursework aligns with all program learning outcomes. Philosophy plans to build upon its sound assessment practices with further refinement of its rubric.”

Response:

The department has welcomed the response by Mark Merritt and has kindly taken to the idea that our assessment process has been in order.

VI. BIG PICTURE

What have you learned about your program from successive rounds of assessment? Is a picture of the whole program starting to emerge? For example, what areas of strength have emerged? What opportunities of improvement have you identified?

The big picture that has emerged from successive rounds of assessment is that we are satisfied with our current PLO's. Opportunities for improvement will be revealed, we think, when we are offered time to engage deeper reflection on the current state of affairs of our major and minor. Our upcoming APR will likely also offer opportunities for valuable feedback and for deeper reflection on our major and minor.

VII. Feedback to your Assessment Team

What suggestions do you have for your assessment team (the Faculty Directors of Curriculum Development and the Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness)? What can we do to improve the process?

For a program such as Philosophy, which has, over the years, completed a full round of assessment of *all its key core LO's* (D1, D3) and *all PLO's*, we see no value at this point at

simply repeating the process as we had it (with direct assessment of PLO's etc.). We are hence asking to be granted a period of more general time for reflection on the major and minor as we have it, rather than being pushed into a "repeat" process of which we do not see the additional value. We gather that our question is a valuable question not just for Philosophy, but for all programs which have completed their assessment cycles.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)