

# PHILOSOPHY MAJOR AND MINOR AGGREGATE REPORT

## ASSESSMENT REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 – 2018 REPORT DUE DATE: 10/26/2018

**Who should submit the report? – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), 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.**

**Note:** Dear Colleagues: In an effort to produce a more streamlined and less repetitive assessment report format, we are piloting this modified template for the present annual assessment cycle. We are requesting an assessment report that would not exceed eight pages of text. Supporting materials may be appended. We will be soliciting your feedback on the report as we attempt to make it more user-friendly.

### Some useful contacts:

1. Prof. Alexandra Amati, FDCD, Arts – [adamati@usfca.edu](mailto:adamati@usfca.edu)
2. Prof. John Lendvay, FDCD, Sciences – [lendvay@usfca.edu](mailto:lendvay@usfca.edu)
3. Prof. Mark Meritt, FDCD, Humanities – [meritt@usfca.edu](mailto:meritt@usfca.edu)
4. Prof. Michael Jonas, FDCD, Social Sciences – [mrjonas@usfca.edu](mailto:mrjonas@usfca.edu)
5. Prof. Suparna Chakraborty, AD Academic Effectiveness – [schakraborty2@usfca.edu](mailto:schakraborty2@usfca.edu)
6. Ms. Corie Schwabenland, Academic Data & Assessment Specialist- [ceschwabenland@usfca.edu](mailto:ceschwabenland@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](mailto: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 & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Marjolein Oele, Chair of the Philosophy Department; moele@usfca.edu

2. 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.

- 3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? 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](mailto: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 2017.

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.

- 4. Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2017-2018?**

We assessed PLO #2, which is similar for both the Major and the Minor

## II. METHODOLOGY

5. 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 Spring 2018, the Philosophy Department proceeded in indirect assessment of its PLO’s, by reviewing the syllabus for one its foundational classes: *Phil 315: Ethics for Majors and Minors*. In Fall 2018, on 8/16/18, the Philosophy Department conducted an assessment of its 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO through direct assessment of student final papers of the same course.

## III. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. 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 Spring 2018, the Philosophy Department proceeded in indirect assessment of all of its PLO's, by reviewing the syllabus for one its foundational classes: *Phil 315: Ethics for Majors and Minors*. We commend the author of the syllabus for a clear alignment of D3 CLO's and PLO's with regard to all assignments for the course. We also discussed that the final paper is the best medium for assessing PLO #2. We concluded that the syllabus is in full alignment with all PLO's.

In Fall 18, on 8/16/18, the Philosophy Department conducted an assessment of its 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO through direct assessment of papers from the same course. The chair arranged for a sample (9 papers) of the final papers from one its foundational classes (Phil 315: Ethics for Majors and Minors), to be drawn. Using papers from this class allowed the department to assess how philosophy majors and minors were achieving its 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO.

Our PLO 2 and the rubric we used is as follows. Please note that the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO is identical for the major and minor.

PLO 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.

- a) Below expectations: The student is unable to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions, or to support her own positions with appropriate arguments. The student shows little or no understanding of any additional implications of her positions.
- b) Minimal acceptable: The student shows that she is able to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions appropriately, and to support her own positions with logically competent arguments. The student can also show an understanding of the more general implications of the question as framed and her position taken on that question.
- c) Exemplary: The student shows that she is able to ask relevant and original questions, to suggest novel answers to those questions, and to support her own positions with creative and compelling arguments. The student can also take into account a range of competing arguments, and show why her position taken is superior to those alternatives.

10 faculty members participated in the assessment. One of the papers was selected for a calibration exercise. Using the rubric above, the participants came to the following results:

	Below Expectations	Minimal Acceptable	Exemplary
Results (Major)		7	3

We discussed the difference in our scores to calibrate our common understanding of PLO 2 and each of the 3 standards.

After the calibration exercise, we divided up the remaining 8 papers. Each paper was evaluated by 3 faculty members. The results are reported in the table below, and

	Below Expectations	Minimal Acceptable	Exemplary
Paper 1 (Major)			3
Paper 2 (Major)	2	1	
Paper 3 (Major)		2	1
Paper 4 (Major)		3	
Paper 5 (Minor)			3
Paper 6 (Minor)		2	1
Paper 7 (Minor)		2	1
Paper 8 (Minor)		3	

Using a score of 2 faculty votes as benchmark for a rating, 1 paper out of 8 scored below expectations, 5 scored minimally acceptable, and 2 papers scored exemplary. Expressed in percentages, this means that 87.5 % of all rated student papers are meeting, or exceeding, our standards for PLO #2.

Our conclusion, immediately after the exercise, was that we were confident in PLO 2's goal and our students' achievement of that goal. We also concluded that the rubric for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO, and all of them, need to be sharpened and revised.

#### IV. CLOSING THE LOOP

- 7. 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.**

Based on both indirect and direct assessment of PLO #2 with regard to *PHIL 315: Ethics for Majors and Minors*, we are confident in PLO 2's goal and our students' achievement of that goal.

Based on our direct assessment exercise, we think our rubrics for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLO, as well as others, are in need of sharpening and revision.

- 8. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2016-2017, submitted in October 2017)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?**

On January 31, 2018, the Department received the following email with feedback sent by Mark Meritt:

*Identifying Information:* Thank you for providing the most important identifying information at the beginning of your *Yearly Assessment Report*; this allows us to communicate effectively with everyone who is engaged with student learning assessment for your department/program. The program/department name is clearly identified, and the report is very logically structured. Since assessment reports are public documents, in future reports please also indicate (at the beginning of the report) the type of program (e. g. major, minor, etc.) and the program's division within the college (i. e., humanities).

*Mission Statement:* The Philosophy major's revised mission statement is lucid, concise, and distinctive. It clearly articulates the program's objectives for students and its relationship to the university-wide mission.

*Program Learning Outcomes:* Program Learning Outcomes for the Philosophy major clearly and succinctly identify the skills and knowledge students should have attained by completion of the program. They also clearly relate to yet are distinct from outcomes for the minor. Philosophy has also developed rubrics describing student work that achieves and fails to achieve each outcome.

*Curriculum Map (Course to PLOs):* All courses are linked with all program learning outcomes, and coverage designations (introduced, developed, mastered) suggest that the Philosophy major curriculum addresses outcomes with increasing depth and rigor as students proceed from lower to upper-level courses. It is uncommon for all courses to link to all program learning outcomes. However, this mapping makes sense, as the major has only three outcomes (a reasonable number) representing important skills that students continue to develop over the course of the curriculum.

*Curriculum Map (PLOs to ILOs):* All of the Philosophy major's learning outcomes map onto all of the university's institutional learning outcomes, though addressing them to different extents. Philosophy's major curriculum thus clearly contributes to its students' achievement of the university's broader goals.

*Assessment Methods:* Philosophy has employed both indirect (collection and examination of syllabi and assignments) and direct (evaluation of student work products) methods to assess its major curriculum thoughtfully and effectively. In the direct assessment, student work products (essays collected from representative courses) were each anonymously evaluated by several professors to determine student achievement of the program's second outcome ("Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues"). Multiple anonymous readings of student work products help to ensure validity of the assessment. Future reports could briefly describe any calibration methods used (e. g., norming and discussion prior to formal scoring) to ensure reliability among readers.

*Results:* Results of indirect assessment show that Philosophy major syllabi and assignments are aligned with program learning outcomes. If possible, a brief description of criteria used to determine course alignment with and communication of outcomes might be included in future reports. Results of direct assessment indicated that the

majority of students are meeting or exceeding expectations for the learning outcome assessed.

*Closing the Loop:* Philosophy presents no immediate plans or need for curricular change. The department very recently revised its outcomes and mission statement. Also, the assessment results suggest that students are meeting learning outcomes, and further assessment will inform future discussions of the major curriculum. Philosophy does, however, plan to refine and formalize its rubric for assessing learning outcomes.

The Philosophy Department addressed and incorporated feedback to the report in the following way:

- With regard to the point that “future reports could briefly describe any calibration methods used (e. g., norming and discussion prior to formal scoring) to ensure reliability among readers,” our current report mentions our calibration exercise preceding our rating exercise.

- With regard to the point that “Results of indirect assessment show that Philosophy major syllabi and assignments are aligned with program learning outcomes. If possible, a brief description of criteria used to determine course alignment with and communication of outcomes might be included in future reports,” the Philosophy Department has included language in this report to describe the criteria for alignment.

- With regard to the point that “Philosophy does, however, plan to refine and formalize its rubric for assessing learning outcomes,” we do want to reiterate that this new AY we will work on revising our rubrics.

## **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**

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

PLO 2) Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.

- a) Below expectations: The student is unable to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions, or to support her own positions with appropriate arguments. The student shows little or no understanding of any additional implications of her positions.
- b) Minimal acceptable: The student shows that she is able to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions appropriately, and to support her own positions with logically competent arguments. The student can also show an understanding of the more general implications of the question as framed and her position taken on that question.
- c) Exemplary: The student shows that she is able to ask relevant and original questions, to suggest novel answers to those questions, and to support her own positions with creative and compelling arguments. The student can also take into account a range of competing arguments, and show why her position taken is superior to those alternatives.