



STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Philosophy

SUBMITTED BY: Michael Boylan and Ariane Economos

DATE: October 1, 2016

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED: Some of the essays are stored on Boylan's Marymount Computer and some are stored in Boylan's office. Future assessment records will be stored by the new chair, Ariane Economos.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the Course Catalog: Please copy and paste the current year's catalog description of this program. This is generally a one-two paragraph description immediately following the name of the program. Please be sure to include the listing of program outcomes as printed.

Marymount's B.A. in Philosophy program invites students to ponder the perennial questions of human existence and their impact upon ethical behavior of the individual and society. Ethics and values are emphasized across the curriculum, and this is a Marymount University distinction.

The study of Philosophy promotes rational and critical thinking and provides an understanding of the intellectual traditions of the ancient, medieval, and modern periods. Marymount Philosophy majors develop an awareness of the role of reason in creating personal world views and become engaged with the broad array of issues central to human existence. Students will become acquainted with the intellectual foundation of much of Western culture and find opportunity to compare it to the tenets of other cultures. Students will also learn to analyze problems using a variety of methods.

This major provides an excellent foundation for careers in law, education, business, and public policy.



List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence	2012-2013	Y	2017-2018
Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments. This ability will allow personal exploration, development and application within an ethical framework.	2012-2013	Y	2017-2018
Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal worldviews. Students can critically engage varied perspectives of the role of reason	2012-2013	Y	2017-2018
Inquiry: Students will conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	2012-1013	Y	2017-2018

Note: in 2013-2014 the department had a program review. Action Plan Progress is noted in Appendix 1.

Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:

As a liberal arts school in the Catholic tradition, philosophy stands at the heart of Marymount’s academic mission. The former president of the university continually named philosophy as one of the important areas of the strategic plan and the new liberal arts core. Philosophy also provides excellent preparation for later studies including law school and any study in the humanities. Our outcomes speak to these concerns. The new Liberal Arts Core demonstrates the significance of philosophy for Marymount’s Mission & Vision in light of requiring two courses for graduation. Our reorganization of the department’s curriculum enlarges the options for Philosophy-2 courses as well as offering 6 Writing Intensive Courses (one of which will be offered each term).

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:

We have decided to move away from the 3-year cycle to a 2-year cycle so that we might attract more students to courses that are offered more frequently. We also note that we have trouble “making” our 400-level courses. We have therefore decided to have only one 400-level course (Topics 416) which we will pre-fill with majors and minors before we offer it again. In pursuant to this we have moved two courses to the low 300-level and made them consistent with PH-E so that they might make (PH 307 Philosophy of Law) and (PH 303 Animals, the Environment & Ethics). PH 305 (Business Ethics) will also count for PH-E credit. Philosophy of Mind and Asian Philosophy are being re-numbered as 300-level courses. We eliminated Philosophy of Biology and Moral Psychology (the former because it has never made and the latter because the only instructor competent to teach it has left the university).



Boylan reviewed 17 papers (Service Courses= 7 papers, Upper Level [Philosophy of Religion] 4 papers; 4 major theses, and 2 papers from minors) and they are as successful at meeting our objectives as we have since 2002 (when senior administration stopped recruiting non-traditional undergraduate students).

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence	Incorporate more active learning techniques in the classroom so that there is greater interaction with more students.	Faculty report various ways of increasing active learning: group work, group presentations, interactive power point.
Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments. This ability will allow personal exploration, development and application within an ethical framework.	Incorporate more active learning techniques in the classroom so that there is greater interaction with more students.	Faculty report various ways of increasing active learning: group work, group presentations, interactive power point.
Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal worldviews. Students can critically engage varied perspectives of the role of reason	Give students detailed feedback on tests and papers.	Put the preparation for research papers into the class participation grade.
Inquiry: Students will conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	Organized library days with research librarians and put in the syllabus material on research methods	Students found them useful. Some have created extra research methods assignments.

Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:

Last year's report suggested we expand our paper sample space (especially in our service courses) which we have done. They also wanted us to be explicit on our assessment standards (which we hope we have done successfully).

Outcomes Assessment 2015-2016

Learning Outcome 1: Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence

Assessment Activity

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i></p>	<p>Analysis <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i></p>
<p>Four senior theses, two papers from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses on outcome #1. (direct)</p>	<p>Students clearly articulated issues related to existence and contextualized them in a philosophical framework in a manner befitting senior philosophy majors, and in the service courses meeting LAC objectives for philosophy</p>	<p>Four majors senior theses, two from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)</p>	<p>1) Each professor has a slightly different grading rubric. But all have in common that students must show skill in deductive and inductive argument as they create “pro” and “con” evaluations of philosophical claims dealing with fundamental problems of human existence within the recognized four areas of philosophy: ethics, logic, epistemology, and metaphysics. If the student essay would have received at least a “B” grade on that rubric, for that skill, then the student’s achievement is deemed “acceptable” for the department. This is different from what is necessary to pass the senior thesis which is a grade of “C” or better on that particular skill.</p> <p>2) All senior majors were evaluated and 2 of our minors. In the future we may evaluate more minors. Two majors measured at “b” and two at “a” level. Both minors measured at “b” level.</p> <p>3) 7 students from service courses were evaluated. The acceptable level for service level courses is a “c” because they are engaging at a more elementary level. Those from Intro all performed at the “c” level or better (two at “c”, three at “b” and two at “a”). This indicates introductory proficiency.</p>

Student majors and minors exit interviews (indirect)—All four majors complied and two minors	We want students to feel that at the end of their major or minor experience that they achieved significant personal growth in this area.	Exit interview conducted by chair when each student left the program.	All students reported that they grew in this area. This was especially true of students who openly profess religious attitudes.
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Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (*Use both direct and indirect measure results*): 3 of 4 senior theses were deemed acceptable on the above standard. Both of the philosophy minors were deemed acceptable (direct). All senior majors and minors who took the exit interview—each major and two minors—reported significant personal growth in this skill area (indirect). The results for the service courses was within the range we are aiming at: an average of “b” levels.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome: The one student who did not meet the acceptable level for assessment (though he passed the course with a “c”) was one of our weakest students over the past few years. We will continue to engage in group discussion on best practices in active student learning.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome: We will continue to seek for ways to incorporate active learning techniques into our courses and discuss our teaching strategies at department meetings and social events.

Learning Outcome 2: Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments. This ability will allow personal exploration, development and application within an ethical framework.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	Analysis <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Four senior theses, two papers from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)	Students need to be able to confront novel situations and apply ethical criteria in order to get at an outcome that they can justify within an essay. In the case of the philosophy of religion courses	Four majors senior theses, two from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)	1) rubric. But all have in common that students must show skill in deductive and inductive argument as they create “pro” and “con” evaluations of philosophical claims. If the student essay would have received at least a “B” grade on that rubric, for that skill, then the student’s

	there is an interplay with religious doctrine and ethics.		<p>achievement is deemed “acceptable” for the department. This is different from what is necessary to pass the senior thesis which is a grade of “C” or better on that particular skill.</p> <p>2) Only two senior majors were evaluated on ethics because the other two theses were on different topics. These two majors achieved at the “A” level. Both of our minors wrote on ethics and they did “B” level or higher. In the future we may evaluate more minors. Two majors measured at “b” and two at “a” level. Both minors measured at “b” level.</p> <p>7 students from service courses were evaluated. They all performed at the “c” level or better (two at “c”, three at “b” and two at “a”). This indicates introductory proficiency.</p>
Student majors and minors exit interviews (indirect)—All four majors complied and two minors	We want students to feel that at the end of their major or minor experience that they achieved significant personal growth in this area.	Exit interview conducted by chair when each student left the program.	All students reported that they grew in this area. This was especially true of students who openly profess religious attitudes.

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

Moral philosophy is a strength of the department. Students showed by their essays that they could examine a novel situation, discover the moral principles, apply these principles and generate an action recommendation.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome: Students do best in ethics when they are “put on the spot” through an assignment to solve difficult cases. We will continue to come up with new cases that are relevant to the times.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome: This is a strength. No current plans for change.

Learning Outcome 3: Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal worldviews. Students can critically engage varied perspectives of the role of reason

Assessment Activity

<p style="text-align: center;">Outcome Measures</p> <p><i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Performance Standard</p> <p><i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Data Collection</p> <p><i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p> <p><i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i></p>
<p>Four senior theses, two papers from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)</p>	<p>Students need to be able to confront novel situations using reason first. This is an important skill. To assess this skill we ask them to create an essay using reason to get to the an outcome that they can justify within an essay. In the case of the philosophy of religion courses there is an interplay faith and reason.</p>	<p>Four majors senior theses, two from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)</p>	<p>3) rubric. But all have in common that students must show skill in deductive and inductive argument as they create “pro” and “con” evaluations of philosophical claims. If the student essay would have received at least a “B” grade on that rubric, for that skill, then the student’s achievement is deemed “acceptable” for the department. This is different from what is necessary to pass the senior thesis which is a grade of “C” or better on that particular skill.</p> <p>4) All majors were evaluated on their use of reason to structure their argument. Three majors achieved at the “A” level. The fourth major achieved “B.” Students from service courses were evaluated. Since the papers observed were from the end of the term we expected that they would all reach at least the “c” level. Those from service courses all performed at the “c” level or better (two at “c”, three at “b” and two at “a”). This indicates introductory proficiency.</p>
<p>Student majors and minors exit interviews (indirect)—All four majors complied and two minors</p>	<p>Answers to questions posed by chair</p>	<p>Chair took notes of meetings</p>	<p>Students felt that their understanding of the role of reason in argument was increased during their time at Marymount</p>

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (*Use both direct and indirect measure results*): We are heartened that students are able to structure arguments using reason and able to relate these arguments to their personal worldview. In our profession this would be ranked the #1 outcome, and we have solid results in this category. The weaker students are helped by group work that several of us use.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome: Since we want to deliver this outcome to each and every student, it is important that we think about ways of reaching the poorest three or four people in a class of thirty. We will brainstorm on best practices to do so.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome: Our assessments for virtually all of our students are strong. At this time, we need to create a special pool for assessment in the future of our weakest students to see what common problems they may exhibit.

Learning Outcome 4: Inquiry: Students will conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	Analysis <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Four senior theses, two papers from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)	Students need to be able to confront novel situations using all the tools of philosophy (the previous three learning outcomes). This is an important skill. To assess this skill we ask them to create an essay using these tools to get to the an outcome that they can justify within an essay. In the case of the philosophy of religion courses there is an interplay faith and reason.	Four majors senior theses, two from minors and four upper level course papers and 7 service courses (direct)	5) rubric. But all have in common that students must show skill in deductive and inductive argument as they create “pro” and “con” evaluations of philosophical claims. If the student essay would have received at least a “B” grade on that rubric, for that skill, then the student’s achievement is deemed “acceptable” for the department. This is different from what is necessary to pass the senior thesis which is a grade of “C” or better on that particular skill. 6) All majors were evaluated on their use of reason to structure their argument. Three majors achieved at the “A” level. The fourth major achieved “B.” Students from service courses were

			evaluated. Since the papers observed were from the end of the term we expected that they would all reach at least the “c” level. Those from service courses all performed at the “c” level or better (two at “c”, three at “b” and two at “a”). This indicates introductory proficiency.
Student majors and minors exit interviews (indirect)—All four majors complied and two minors	Answers to questions posed by chair	Chair took notes of meetings	Students felt that their understanding of the role of philosophical tools for problem solving in argument. Their ability to practically integrate their philosophy to their own lives was increased during their time at Marymount

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results): During the service courses students begin very low on this scale. We have demonstrated good results. The four areas work together. Students either get them all or they are weak on them all together. Unlike some classes like mathematics, philosophy holistically engages students in several skill sets “all at the same time.” This is the reason that they rise on all of them at the same time.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome: Again, most of our students are successfully executing our outcomes as measured by the essays we give them. Our task in the future is to help those at the bottom who we do not presently assess. This is an important goal for the future.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome: The way to reach our weakest student is not by structural changes but by creating a list of best practices that will help us execute better for our marginal students.