

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Philosophy

SUBMITTED BY: Ariane Economos

DATE: 9/30/17

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:

All data and documents are stored on the Chair's hard drive and in the Philosophy Department's Files on Box.

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.

Catalog Description:

The study of philosophy promotes rational and critical thinking and provides a sense of our intellectual traditions from the ancient, medieval, and modern periods.

The philosophy major aims to develop a critical and articulated understanding of basic beliefs and value judgments. Students of philosophy become acquainted with the intellectual foundation of much of Western culture and find opportunities to compare it to the tenets of other cultures. They also learn to analyze problems through a variety of methods.

Philosophy majors become qualified for careers in which a liberal arts degree is desirable. It is the recommended undergraduate major for students intending to pursue advanced studies in philosophy, religion, or theology, or in many areas of professional study, such as law. Internships in a variety of human service agencies or congressional offices add to the practical dimension of the study.

Upon successful completion of the philosophy program, students will be able to (**program outcomes**):

- demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problems of human existence;
- synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments;
- articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal world views;
- conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories; and
- demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity, courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one's personal world view.

Our outcomes have **not recently changed**. Thus:



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 problems of human existence.	2015-2016	N	2017-2018
Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.	2015-2016	N	2017-2018
Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal world views.	2015-2016	N	2018-2019
Students conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	2015-2016	Y	2018-2019
Students demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity, courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one’s personal world view.	2012-2013	Y	2018-2019

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

“Marymount’s mission emphasizes intellectual curiosity, service to others, and a global perspective. A Marymount education is grounded in the liberal arts, promotes career preparation, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth. A student-centered learning community that values diversity and focuses on the education of the whole person, Marymount guides the intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development of each individual.” (from the University webpage)

The outcomes of the philosophy department relate to this mission in a number of ways:

1. One of our outcomes is that students **demonstrate intellectual curiosity** (among other epistemic virtues), which directly supports part of Marymount’s mission.
2. The philosophy program **prepares students to be of service to others in a thoughtful and effective way** by training students to assess ethical and moral arguments.
3. As part of the Liberal Arts Core, the philosophy program **provides** some of the **grounding in the liberal arts** that is part of Marymount’s mission.
4. A number of our outcomes **emphasize the development of the whole person**. For example, we work to enable students to articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal world views.
5. We support Marymount’s mission to **guide the ethical development of each student** by enabling them to synthesize and assess ethical arguments.

The philosophy department’s outcomes relate to Marymount’s strategic plan by offering a rigorous, cohesive, and integrated undergraduate curriculum that produces superior graduates able to succeed in their positions and communities. We have **increased the number of long-term faculty teaching first-year undergraduate courses**, by down-numbering PH 200 to PH 100 and having the course be taught primarily by full time tenured/tenure-track faculty or by long-term adjunct instructors. We have also developed strategies for **expanding online education opportunities** that promote student-faculty connections in appropriate courses by creating an online section of PH 309 and continuing to increase the quality of this course.

Finally, the philosophy department’s outcomes relate to the plan of the School of Arts & Sciences by **training students to think critically, creatively, and ethically**. Our outcomes provide students with a set of transferable skills that help them to learn, adapt, understand diverse perspectives, and work in a variety of careers. We provide students “the opportunity to develop into independent, reflective, ethical, critical (and self-critical) thinkers and lifelong learners.” (from A&S webpage)



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 collected a total of twelve papers for assessment. The papers were collected from our one graduating Senior, three of our graduating minors, and all of our current majors. Each paper was a minimum of 5 pages in length. The papers were prepared for blind review. We produced two rubrics (included in the appendix) that were then used to assess the extent to which our outcomes were achieved in these written products. Three full-time faculty members in the philosophy department participated in the assessment process. The assessment was conducted in four ways:

1. We measured the improvement in outcomes of our one graduating Senior’s written work across her four years at Marymount.
2. We measured these outcomes in the written work of all three of our graduating minors.
3. We measured these outcomes in the written work of all of our current majors (both were in their junior year).
4. We measured these outcomes in departmental meetings that were focused on student performance.

The philosophy program faces at least one significant **challenge** in assessment, and that is our small number of majors. Only one student graduated with a BA in Philosophy this year. In order to have a meaningful assessment of our program, therefore, I have included a portfolio of written work by our one graduating senior, collected over her past four years at Marymount, as well as written products from three graduating minors and from both of our current majors in this year’s assessment process.

In the future, **we plan to improve our assessment process** by updating and improving the rubrics used for assessment, by conducting exit interviews with the majors who will be graduating this year, and by including data from our alumni as an indirect measure (we did not receive feedback from alumni this year). Additionally, we plan to ask our majors to complete a short reflection piece on their experience of the program, as part of their Senior Seminar thesis.

I believe that the ways in which we implemented improvements to our program, as documented below, provides evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement.

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.	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. Additionally, we plan to (1) standardize course objectives across our multi-sectional courses (PH-200, PH-305, and PH-309), (2) down-number our introductory course from 200 to 100, so as to enable our minors and	We discussed and shared teaching strategies, and especially active learning strategies , at our department meetings. We have completed the first two of these planned improvements, and have begun work on the third. As was pointed out in our departmental review, students need to begin taking philosophy earlier in their years at Marymount, so that they have more

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
	<p>majors to jump right in as first-semester freshmen and begin their development as students of philosophy, and (3) discuss whether other courses ought to be down-numbered and have more standardized course objectives, so that we can more clearly track the development of our minor and majors, both to commend those who are meeting or exceeding our objectives, and to reach out sooner to those who are struggling.</p>	<p>time to progress toward mastery of our outcomes. To that end, in Fall 2016, we (1) standardized course objectives across all of our multi-sectional courses, and (2) down-numbered our introductory course from 200 to 100, so that students can begin taking philosophy courses as first semester freshmen. Additionally, we (3) began an ongoing discussion about which, if any, of our courses ought to be down-numbered from 300 to 200 level.</p>
<p>Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.</p>	<p>This is a departmental strength, and we have no major current plans for change, other than to standardize course objectives across two of our multi-sectional courses in ethics and moral philosophy: PH-305, and PH-309, and to discuss whether these courses ought to be down-numbered to the 200 level</p>	<p>In Fall 2016, we not only completed the plan to standardize course objectives across our multi-sectional courses in moral philosophy, but we further decided to standardize course objectives across all of our courses in ethics and moral philosophy (even if we only offer one section per semester). This will enable us to better track students' progress toward this outcome.</p>
<p>Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal worldviews.</p>	<p>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. Additionally, as mentioned above, we plan to down-number our introductory course from 200 to 100, so as to enable our minors and majors to jump right in as first-semester freshmen and begin their development as students of philosophy, and to discuss whether other courses ought to have more standardized course objectives, so that we can clearly track the development of our minor and majors, both to commend those who are meeting or exceeding our objectives, and to reach out sooner to those who are struggling.</p>	<p>We have completed the plan to down-number our introductory course, as mentioned above, so that students can begin to develop toward mastery of this objective at an earlier stage in their time at Marymount. We have created an assessment system, as discussed below, for measuring the development of our students across all of their years at Marymount, especially students who demonstrate challenges in their performance.</p>
<p>Students will conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about</p>	<p>The ways to reach our weakest students include: creating a list of best practices that will help us execute better for our marginal students, enabling</p>	<p>Steps taken to improve student performance on this outcome are mentioned above. Additionally, we have discussed in our department meetings</p>

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	our minors and majors to jump right in as first-semester freshmen and begin their development as students of philosophy, and finding ways of more clearly tracking the development of our minor and majors, both to commend those who are meeting or exceeding our objectives , and to reach out sooner to those who are struggling. The specific plans we have for making these program improvements have been discussed above.	some best practices for reaching students who are struggling. Additionally, we have commended and rewarded our outstanding students by inviting them to become officers of the Philosophy Club , something that looks good on graduate applications.

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

The Assessment Committee recommended that we (1) “consider other indirect measures that are **more objective**”, and (2) “**explain the data collection** process more fully.”

In response to (1), although we continue to use the assessment of papers as our primary means of measuring outcomes, as this is appropriate to our field, we have **re-designed the process to be more objective**. This year, the papers were prepared for blind review, and have been assessed by multiple faculty members using rubrics. This has added a significant degree of objectivity to the assessment process.

In response to (2), **the data collection process has been explained more fully** this year. Last year’s assessment report did not explain how the chair selected the papers to be assessed, nor did it explain the standards according to which the outcomes were measured. All of this information is included in this year’s report.

Outcomes Assessment 2016-2017

Learning Outcome 1: Students 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>
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the improvement in our only graduating Senior's written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.	An average of 3 points or higher on work from the senior year is acceptable. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly selected from the student's four years at Marymount.	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Three papers written by our one graduating major were prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) One student participated in this, and two of her three papers were deemed acceptable. The student showed improvement in this outcome over time.
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the written work of all three of our graduating minors was measured.	An average of 3 points or higher is acceptable.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly selected from each of the student's senior year work.	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Three papers written by our three graduating minors were prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Three students participated in this, and all three of the papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the written work of all of our current majors (both were in their junior year) was measured.	An average of 3 points or higher is acceptable.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly selected from each of the student's sophomore and junior year work.	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Six papers written by our current majors (both in their junior year) were prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Two students participated in this, and all six of the papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of all student performance of majors and minors in this area was conducted once per semester.	Three out of four full-time faculty believe that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate the outcome, as evidenced by the student's academic performance, both written and oral.	Full-time faculty discussed and compared student outcomes in their classes in this area during department meetings	Four out of four full-time faculty held that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate this outcome, as evidenced by the student's academic performance, both written and oral.

Interpretation of Results



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

This learning outcome was achieved by students in 11 out of the 12 papers assessed (both past and current), and by all current students, according to faculty evaluation, and so **students demonstrated strong performance in this area**, as was evidenced by **both direct and indirect measures**. The paper that did not adequately meet this outcome was a freshmen year paper by our major. Her subsequent work showed improvement in this area.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

Overall, our students are successfully achieving this outcome, and so this is a program strength.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

We plan to continue tracking this outcome in our students, to ensure that it continues to be a program strength. We should also be sure to assess students for this outcome throughout their time at Marymount. While our graduating Senior did improve on this outcome over time, she started fairly weak in this area, and could have used more help during her freshmen and sophomore years. Other students may also need additional help earlier in the program.

Learning Outcome 2: Students demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity, courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one’s personal world view.

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>
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the improvement in our only graduating Senior’s written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.	An average of 3 points or higher on work from the senior year is acceptable. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly selected from the student’s four years at Marymount.	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Three papers written by our one graduating major were prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) One student participated in this, and two of her three papers were deemed acceptable. The student showed improvement in this outcome over time.
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the written work of all	An average of 3 points or higher is acceptable.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Three papers written by our three graduating minors were

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>
three of our graduating minors was measured.		selected from each of the student's senior year work.	prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Three students participated in this, and two of the three papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Direct Measure: Using a rubric, the written work of all of our current majors (both were in their junior year) was measured.	An average of 3 points or higher is acceptable.	Written products at least 5 pages long were randomly selected from each of the student's sophomore and junior year work.	1) A rubric was developed to assess this outcome. Six papers written by our current majors (both in their junior year) were prepared for blind review. The papers and rubric were sent to three faculty members. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Two students participated in this, and four of the six papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of all student performance of majors and minors in this area was conducted once per semester.	Three out of four full-time faculty believe that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate the outcome, as evidenced by the student's academic performance, both written and oral.	Full-time faculty discussed and compared student performance in their classes in this area during department meetings.	Two of the four full-time faculty believe that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate the entirety of this outcome, as evidenced by the student's academic performance, both written and oral. Faculty noted that there were many parts to this outcome, and this will be remedied in future assessments.

Interpretation of Results

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

Direct measure: This learning outcome was achieved by students in 7 of the 12 papers assessed. **Indirect measure:** This learning outcome was achieved by students in 50% of their overall academic work this year.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

This is an area of the program that **needs more work**. Students were relatively **strong in demonstrating intellectual curiosity** and some ability to conduct independent inquiry, as evidenced by their ability to produce written work centered around a focused topic of inquiry and their ability to explore and analyze a variety of arguments



and evidence. However, some written work **did not adequately demonstrate that they were questioning key assumptions or adopting only claims supported by evidence**, and so some students did not meet the outcome of demonstrating the ability to hold beliefs provisionally.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

We need to reinforce to students that philosophy is not just about developing the tools to argue for views and positions one has already adopted, but should also give students the ability to questions these views and an openness to revising them. We will continue discussion at our departmental meetings how best we can ensure that students are developing these abilities. Additionally, while students **performed well on analyzing the arguments and evidence of others**, they **did not always demonstrate the originality of their own thought**. We will need to have a departmental discussion regarding the extent to which students are repeating the arguments of others, vs the extent to which they are producing their own. **By junior year, students should be demonstrating more original argumentation**. Designating one upper-level class per year that especially emphasizes developing this skill may be an approach to improving this outcome. This will need to be subject to more departmental discussion.

Curriculum Map

These will be sent for review and feedback to the Liberal Arts Core Committee.

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM MAP

Degree Program: Philosophy

Year: 2016-17

Program Outcomes:

Program Outcome	Critical Thinking	Inquiry	Information Literacy	Written Communication
Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problems of human existence.	X	X		
Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.	X	X	X	X
Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal world views.	X	X	X	X
Students conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	X	X	X	X
Students demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity, courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one's personal world view.	X	X		

Curriculum Map:

For each course, indicate which competencies are included using the following key. Please refer to the director of assessment in Planning and Institutional Effectiveness if you need more detailed explanation of the four core competencies.

Level of instruction: I – Introduced, R-reinforced and opportunity to practice, M-mastery at the senior or exit level

Assessment: PR-project, P-paper, E-exam, O-oral presentation, I-internship, OT-other (explain briefly)

Required Course	Critical Thinking		Inquiry		Information Literacy		Written Communication	
	Level	Assess	Level	Assess	Level	Assess	Level	Assess
PH 100	I	P, O	I	P, O	I	P, O	I	P, O
300 level courses	R	P, O	R	P, O	R	P, O	R	P, O
400 level courses	M	P, O, PR	M	P, O, PR	M	P, O, PR	M	P, O, PR
Internship	M	PR	M	PR	M	PR	M	PR