STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Philosophy (BA)
SUBMITTED BY: Ariane Economos
DATE: 9/30/18
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 a 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.

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** a broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problems of human existence.	2015-2016	N	2018-2019
Students **synthesize** and **assess** ethical and moral arguments.	2015-2016	**Y**	2019-2020
Students **demonstrate** the role of critical thinking and reason in the understanding of and production of philosophical work.	2015-2016	**Y**	2019-2020
Students **conduct** appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	2016-2017	N	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.	2016-2017	N	2019-2020

Describe briefly how the program's outcomes support Marymount's mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan *(generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points)*:

"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 Design, Arts, and Humanities** 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 DAH webpage)

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements to the process, and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment *(generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points)*:

We included a total of twenty papers for assessment. The papers were collected from our one graduating Senior, all of our current majors, and all of our minors. Each paper was a minimum of 5 pages in length. The papers were prepared for blind review. We used two rubrics – the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric and the AAC&U's Critical Thinking Rubric - to assess the extent to which two of our outcomes were achieved in these written products. Full-time faculty members in the philosophy department participated in the assessment process. Additionally, an exit interview was conducted with our graduating Senior. Thus, the assessment was conducted in five ways:

1. We measured the improvement in outcomes of our graduating Senior's written work across her four years at Marymount (direct).
2. We measured these outcomes in the written work of all of our majors (direct).
3. We measured these outcomes in the written work of all of our current minors (direct)
4. We measured these outcomes in departmental meetings that were focused on student performance (indirect).
5. Exit interview conducted with graduating Senior (indirect).

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, we included a portfolio of written work by our one graduating senior, collected over her past four years at Marymount, as well as current written products from both our majors and our minors in this year's assessment process.

In the future, **we plan to improve our assessment process** by continuing to update and improve 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 (Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)
Students conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	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.	The department has implemented a plan to offer extra assistance in conducting subject-appropriate research over the entirety of a student's time in our program. We have a department-wide meeting each semester where students can present research they are currently working on, and get feedback from both faculty and their peers. Additionally, we revamping our Inquiry-designated courses, so that all majors will take multiple courses that emphasize the development of subject-appropriate research.
Students demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity,	We need to reinforce to students that philosophy is not just about developing the tools to argue for views and positions one has already	In order to increase these epistemic virtues in co-curricular ways, the department has decided to start

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update *(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)*
courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one's personal world view.	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.	our Philosophy Club back up, and this time to apply for official club standing. The Philosophy Club will be encouraged to host "debate nights," where students can actively develop these outcomes (in particular, intellectual curiosity and independent inquiry) by participating in guided debates with their peers. The department also implemented a plan to have originality of argumentation and independent inquiry highlighted for majors and minors who have sophomore-level or higher standing: since many of these students take their upper-level philosophy courses together with non-majors, we have recommended that our majors and minors have a minimum of two meetings per semester with their philosophy instructor, to gain one-on-one assistance in developing original argumentation.

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

The Assessment Committee expressed a number of concerns about last year's assessment process. Therefore, we have re-vamped the entire process, using new rubrics, increasing faculty participation by including discussion of our outcomes at each department meeting, and adding an exit interview for graduating seniors in order to increase the data we have.

Comment: The Assessment Committee recommended that more measures be used to assess each outcome, that we revise our rubrics, and that we collect additional data.

Response: This year **we have used three measures to assess each outcome**. We have **revised our rubrics** and are using the rubrics recommended by the AAC&U for the assessment of Ethical Reasoning and Critical Thinking. We have **increased the amount of data that we have collected**, both by using new measures and by including work from all of our majors and minors.

Outcomes Assessment 2017-2018

Learning Outcome 1: Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process.* *2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the improvement in **our only graduating senior's** written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.	The student's senior-level work should be at level 4 (or Capstone). Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the student's four years at Marymount. We only had one graduating senior, so the population was one.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Six papers written by our graduating senior were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) One student participated in this (because we had only one graduating senior), and five of her six papers were deemed acceptable. The student showed improvement in this outcome over time.
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the written work of **all current majors** was measured.	Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 3 (or Milestone) or higher. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the students' work. We only had two non-graduating majors, so the population was two. Both students were in their junior year.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Four papers written by our two non-graduating majors were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Two students participated in this, and three out of the four papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the written work of **all current minors** was measured.	Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2.5 (or Milestone) or higher. It is acceptable for freshmen to be at level 1 if the paper is taken from their first philosophy course, but it should show development toward level 2. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the students' work. We had ten minors, and work was included from each of them.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Ten papers written by our minors were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Ten students participated in this, and six of the papers assessed were deemed to be at level 2.5 or higher.
Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of the performance of **majors and minors** in this area was conducted once per semester.	Three out of four full-time faculty should hold 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.	Three 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.
Indirect Measure: Exit interview with **graduating senior**.	Student should demonstrate an understanding of this outcome and the ways in which it will serve her in future career opportunities.	The Chair met with the graduating student and conducted the interview. We only had one graduating Senior, so the population was one.	The student clearly demonstrated an understanding of this outcome, as evidence by her ability to discuss and assess moral argument during the interview. She also demonstrated knowledge of how this outcome can serve her in future career opportunities.

Interpretation of Results

Describe the extent to which this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)*:

While our graduating major showed improvement and ultimately mastery when it came to this outcome, some of the work of our current majors and our minors does not show this mastery. Additionally, one faculty member expressed concerns about their students' development in this area.

Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement <u>relative to assessment of outcome</u>:

One program **strength** is the **flexibility** our program offers when it comes to the course of study necessary to complete the major or minor. Students should be able to take courses both theoretical and applied ethics as part of the course of study, which will help them to develop this outcome in more of their work. Having said this, one **opportunity for improvement** that our program has is the opportunity to **increase the number of courses in applied ethics**. Currently, students with an interest in business ethics, environmental ethics, social and political ethics, and theoretical ethics have a number of sections of classes per year from which to choose. But the program lacks courses in bioethics, healthcare ethics, medical ethics, and newer, cutting-edge areas of ethical study such as cyber-ethics. Thus, increasing the number of courses in applied ethics might encourage more majors and minors to take classes that will directly help them to develop this outcome.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome</u>:

Based upon assessment of this outcome, we **plan to improve our curriculum** by increasing the number of courses in applied ethics that we offer. In particular, we plan to develop a course in bioethics, medical ethics, and/or healthcare ethics, and also plan to develop a course in cyber-ethics. Developing these courses will hopefully encourage our majors and minors to include more courses in which they learn to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.

Learning Outcome 2: Students demonstrate the role of critical thinking and reason in the understanding of and production of philosophical work.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process.* *2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the improvement in **our only graduating senior's** written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.	The student's senior-level work should be at level 4 (or Capstone). Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the student's four years at Marymount. We only had one graduating senior, so the population was one.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Six papers written by our graduating senior were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) One student participated in this (because we had only one graduating senior), and five of her six papers were deemed acceptable. The student showed improvement in this outcome over time. The student was also an honors student, so her ability

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process.* *2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
			to demonstrate strong reasoning and critical thinking skills was perhaps unsurprising.
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the written work of **all current majors** was measured.	Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 3 (or Milestone) or higher. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the students' work. We only had two non-graduating majors, so the population was two. Both students were in their junior year.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Four papers written by our two non-graduating majors were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Two students participated in this, and three out of the four papers assessed were deemed acceptable.
Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U's Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the written work of **all current minors** was measured.	Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2.5 (or Milestone) or higher. It is acceptable for freshmen to be at level 1 if the paper is taken from their first philosophy course, but it should show development toward level 2. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.	Written products at least 5 pages long were selected from the students' work. We had ten minors, and work was included from each of them.	1) A rubric was used to assess this outcome. Ten papers written by our minors were prepared for blind review. Completed rubrics were returned to the Chair. 2) Ten students participated in this, and six of the papers assessed were deemed to be at level 2.5 or higher.
Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of the performance of **majors and minors** in this area was conducted once per semester.	Three out of four full-time faculty should hold 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.	Three 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.
Indirect Measure: Exit interview with **graduating senior**.	Student should demonstrate an understanding of this outcome and the ways in which it will serve her in future career opportunities.	The Chair met with the graduating student and conducted the interview. We only had one graduating Senior, so the population was one.	The student demonstrated an understanding of this outcome, as evidence by her ability to utilize critical thinking during the interview, and to assess the importance of this in developing good philosophical work. She also demonstrated knowledge of how this outcome will serve her in future career opportunities.

Interpretation of Results

Describe the extent to which this learning outcomes has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)*:

The majority of faculty held that most of our majors and minors are demonstrating this outcome. Additionally, our graduating senior demonstrated mastery of this outcome, both in her written work and during her exit interview. Having said that, some of our majors and minors failed to demonstrate this outcome in some of their written work. Only three out of four of our majors' papers were at level 3 or higher, and only six of our ten minors were at level 2.5.

Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement <u>relative to assessment of outcome</u>:

As discussed above, one program **strength** is the **flexibility** our program offers when it comes to the course of study necessary to complete the major or minor. Thus, students who seem to be struggling to achieve this outcome should be able to take courses such as Logic, that primarily focus on the development of reasoning and critical thinking skills, as part of their progress toward their degree. One **opportunity for improvement** is to provide more direction when advising students which courses to take. While all majors are required to take Logic, minors are not. Advising minors who are struggling with reasoning skills to take this class may be beneficial. Another **opportunity for improvement** may be to require all lower-level courses to include at least a couple of weeks of material on the identification of informal fallacies and at least an introduction to formal reasoning. While students are being taught these skills across the classes in our program, it might help to get students on the right track early on by having a portion of a lower-level class explicitly dedicated to developing this outcome.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome:</u>

Based upon the assessment of this outcome, we plan to **improve our curriculum** by requesting that instructors explicitly include informal logic in the content of their lower-level courses. Additionally, we are going to suggest to the Philosophy Club (which includes all majors and minors) that they host events that serve to develop and strengthen this outcome. For example, have "debate nights," where students debate a current issue using correct methods of argumentation and avoiding fallacies, may help our students to become better able to demonstrate the role of reasoning in the production of philosophical work.

Appendices

Our rubrics are attached separately.