

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP)

I. Mission Statement

The mission of the Philosophy Department is to be the beacon of the life of the mind in the region we serve. We aim to foster the love of wisdom in a variety of ways: through our curricular offerings in both General Education and in the Philosophy major, through our interactions with students in mentoring and advising, through our scholarship, and through our engagement with the community.

To carry out this mission, the department provides a Philosophy Major as well as Options to the Major in Pre-Law and in Religious Studies. Additionally, we serve majors and non-majors alike with a broad offering of General Education courses and electives. Drawing upon the texts and traditions of the global philosophical quest for meaning and understanding, our program serves to expand students' intellectual horizons, foster life-long learning, and prepare them for further professional study. Lastly, through our programs in the Eastern and Western traditions in philosophy and religious studies, we instill within our students an informed appreciation of cultures other than their own.

II. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

The department faculty has identified four general goals in the discipline of Philosophy. Each general goal has a specific **primary learning outcome** as well as secondary learning outcomes. We intend to assess these outcomes using direct and indirect measures.

Philosophy students should be able to:

1. Appreciate the significance of philosophy and religion in human affairs

- a. Students should be able to **describe the history of (Philosophical and Religious) ideas** from Parmenides to the 21st Century so as not to repeat past errors
- b. Students should be able to explain philosophical areas/topics: Logic, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Value Theory
- c. Students should be able to describe and explain major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism

2. Understand basic logic underlying ideas, values, and approaches in philosophy and religion

- a. Students should understand basic logic and employ it to reconstruct, criticize, and evaluate arguments
- b. Students should be able to **defend a specific thesis in writing using logical argumentation and authoritative evidence**
- c. Students should be able to engage in oral debate
- d. Students should be able to openly and tolerantly explore ideas concerning religious belief, ethical commitment, and worldviews

3. Recognize critical thinking employed in texts, traditions, arguments, and ideas

- a. Students should be able to **identify and apply critical thinking**
- b. Students should be able to employ and explain basic exegetical and hermeneutical methodologies
- c. Students should be able to situate a text within its historical context
- d. Students should be able to reconstruct dialogues/debates among philosophers and traditions (e.g., empiricism v. rationalism, etc.)

4. Value the global and local diversity of philosophical and religious interpretations

- a. Students should be able to **contribute an act of service that involves engaged dialogue**
- b. Students should be able to advocate for diverse methodologies and traditions
- c. Students should be able to practice tolerance and dialogue
- d. Students should be able to describe the flaws of using simplistic, monological reductionist or relativistic arguments in their communications

III. Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)

“I” = Introduced; “R” = Reinforced; “A” = Advanced

Course	LO 1 – History of Philosophy (Demonstrate engagement with particular philosophical and/or religious ideas, theories, and traditions)	LO 2 – Logical Argumentation Write a paper on an arguable topic using logical organization and quoted evidence from authoritative sources	LO 3 – Critical Thinking Demonstrate analytical and interpretive skills by integrating distinct times, places, and disciplinary methodologies	LO 4 – Act of Service In a complex world, contribute an act of service that involves engaged dialogue
1	I	I	I	I
2	I	I	I	I
10	I	I	I	I
20	I	I	I	I
25	I	I	I	I
28	I	I	R	R
45	I	I	I	I
101	R	R	R	R
103	R	R	R	R
105	R	R	R	R
107	R	R	R	R
108	R	R	R	R
110	R	R	R	R
115	R	R	R	R
118	R	R	R	R
120	R	R	R	R

121	R	R	R	R
122	R	R	R	R
125	R	R	R	R
127	R	R	R	R
129	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
130	R	R	R	R
131	R	R	R	R
132	R	R	R	R
133W	R	R	R	R
134	R	R	R	R
135	R	R	R	R
136	R	R	R	R
137	R	R	R	R
138	R	R	R	R
140	R	R	R	R
145	R	R	A	A
146	R	R	A	A
150	R	R	R	R
156	R	R	R	R
157	R	R	R	R
165T	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
170T	A	A	A	A
172T	A	A	A	A
199	A	A	A	A

IV. Assessment Methods

Direct Measures (at least three)

1. Assess term papers from upper division course (such as senior seminar or advanced topics course) using scoring rubric for three primary learning outcomes of History of Philosophy, Logical Argumentation, and Critical Thinking
2. Assess term papers from a lower division General Education course using scoring rubric for three primary learning outcomes of History of Philosophy, Logical Argumentation, and Critical Thinking
3. Assess oral presentation skills from undergraduate student conference presentations using scoring rubric for three primary learning outcomes of History of Philosophy, Logical Argumentation, and Critical Thinking
4. Assess LOC 1 (“appreciate significance of philosophy and religion in human affairs”), as well as LOC 4 (“service”) in short paper assignment in Phil 199 (Pre-Law Internship) using scoring rubric developed to measure this outcome.
5. Assess LOC 1 (“appreciate significance of philosophy and religion in human affairs”), as well as LOC 3 (Critical Thinking Skills) in short paper assignment in Phil 20 (“Moral Questions” G.E. course) using scoring rubric developed to measure this outcome.

Indirect Measures *(Alumni Survey is required)*

1. Assess graduates using graduation survey for four primary learning outcomes of History of Philosophy, Logical Argumentation, Critical Thinking, and Act of Service
2. Assess graduates performance at annual Convocation event
3. Assess GPA’s and grade distributions for Philosophy Majors and for Courses taught in the department (both General Education and Majors courses)

V. Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

All outcomes within each goal will be measured when the goal is indicated as being measured by methods listed.

	Goal 1: History and Significance of Philosophy	Goal 2: Logical Argumentation	Goal 3: Critical Thinking	Goal 4: Act of Service
1. Lower Division General Education Course Paper	x	x	x	
2. Upper Division Seminar Course Paper	x	x	x	
3. Conference Oral Presentation	x	x	x	
4. Internship paper	x			x
5. Moral Questions short paper	x		x	
6. Alumni/Graduation Survey	x	x	x	x
7. Convocation Evaluation	General assessment of student attitudes and experience			
7. GPA's and Grade Distribution	General assessment of teaching across the curriculum			

II. Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

Academic Year 2012 to 2013

Method 2. Employ rubric for upper division seminar course paper. (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 3. Employ rubric for oral conference paper presentation (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 4. Employ rubric for Internship paper (Goal 1 and 4)

Method 5. Employ rubric for Moral Questions short paper (Goal 1 and 3)

Method 6. Employ alumni/graduation survey (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)

Method 7. Convocation evaluation (general student attitude and experience)

Method 8. GPA's and Grade Distribution (overall assessment of achievement)

Academic Year 2013 to 2014

Method 1. Employ rubric for lower division general education course paper (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 2. Employ rubric for upper division seminar course paper. (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 3. Employ rubric for oral conference paper presentation (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 4. Employ rubric for Internship paper (Goal 1 and 4)

Method 5. Employ rubric for Moral Questions short paper (Goal 1 and 3)

Method 6. Employ alumni/graduation survey (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)

Method 7. Convocation evaluation (general student attitude and experience)

Method 8. GPA's and Grade Distribution (overall assessment of achievement)

Academic Year 2014 to 2015

Method 1. Employ rubric for lower division general education course paper (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 2. Employ rubric for upper division seminar course paper. (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 3. Employ rubric for oral conference paper presentation (Goal 1, 2, 3)

Method 4. Employ rubric for Internship paper (Goal 1 and 4)

Method 5. Employ rubric for Moral Questions short paper (Goal 1 and 3)

Method 6. Employ alumni/graduation survey (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)

Method 7. Convocation evaluation (general student attitude and experience)

Method 8. GPA's and Grade Distribution (overall assessment of achievement)

III. Process for Closing the Loop

The Department conducted the assessment activities indicated above for AY 2012-13 (with method 2 for this year yet to be completed—as a summer 2013 project).

Findings and plans for closing the loop

1. Our assessment efforts (Methods 1, 2, and 3 especially) have continued to measure a deficiency in the rigor of student written argumentation. The department is discussing increased focus on philosophical argumentation and thesis writing course in all of our courses.
2. We are pleased with the oral communication skills of our best students (Method 3) although we recognize that our students need further focus on philosophical argumentation, contextualization, and hermeneutical strategies. We will continue to focus on these aspects of critical thinking, especially in our upper-level course for philosophy majors. We also notice a split between philosophy and religious studies students in terms of focus and method. We will work across these disciplines to better integrate both content and method across the curriculum.
3. The department was pleasantly surprised to discover (as measured by method 4) that our “pre-law” philosophy majors were proficient LOC 1 (awareness of importance and value and history of philosophy). This is reassuring in light of our initial hypothesis, which was that pre-law students are more vocationally oriented and less aware of the importance of more traditional philosophical methodologies and values. We will continue to make sure that pre-law specific course (Phil 118, 127, 121, 199...) will contain a focus on the “philosophical” aspects of pre-law study.
4. The department is concerned about grade inflation (as a result of method 7). We are discussing this amongst ourselves and will work to compare and standardize grading schemes and grade distributions across our curriculum. We will communicate this to our part-time and ad hoc faculty as well.
5. The graduate survey and convocation evaluation indicates that students are basically satisfied with the degree program. They offered some concrete suggestions—especially about unifying the curriculum in more obvious ways, which we will consider as we move forward. And we are aware of the need to develop more sense of community among our majors, which we will do by reinvigorating student clubs and activities.
6. We will work to develop a list of alumni which can be contacted for a more robust form of alumni survey.

