**Philosophy Department**

**Major Assessment Report**

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| 1. **learning outcome(s) assessed**

We did 4 assessment activities that included major classes, covering **all four** general SLOs. 1. PHIL 20 LO1, history of philosophy& LO2, logical argumentation
2. PHIL 170T LO2 logic arg., LO3 critical thinking, LO4 value diversity & tolerance
3. PHIL 199 LO1 history of philosophy
4. Voicing Ideas Symposium all LOs with emphasis on LO2 argumentation and LO4 service
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| 1. **assignment used and method of assessment used**
2. PHIL 20
	1. Assignment: written work where students had to interview someone about every moral conflict they studied and draw a conclusion with reference to course texts
	2. Method: Read the 10 representative submissions (from 116 who completed the assignment). Assess whether and how well they demonstrate introductory level presence of the *three* Learning Outcomes stated above. Then, score each paper on each LO on the following scale:

1 = poor, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4 = excellent * 1. Benchmark: For 20, all LOs are expected to be introduced. So, we expect that five of the papers will score 3 or 4 in each area, with at least two being a 4 and no more than one being a 1.
1. PHIL 170T
	1. Assignment: senior seminar final argumentative papers
	2. Method: Read through 10 submissions (most of the 15 who completed the assignment). Assess whether and how well they demonstrate presence of the Learning Outcomes stated. Then, score each paper on the following scale:

1 = poor, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4 = excellent * 1. Benchmark: For 170T, all LOs are expected to be at advanced stage as this is the senior seminar. So, we expect that none will be a 1 and at least five will score 3 or 4, with at least two being a 4.
1. PHIL 199
	1. Assignment: short writing assignment from the Pre-Law Internship where they connect training in philosophy to their intern activities, the practice of law, and their decisions about future careers
	2. Method: Read through the 8 submissions (from 10 enrolled but 8 who completed it). Assess whether and how well they demonstrate presence of LO1. Then, score each paper on the following scale:

1 = poor, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4 = excellent * 1. Benchmark: For 199, all LOs are expected to be at advanced stage. So, we expect that none will be a 1 and at least five will score 3 or 4, with at least two being a 4.
1. Voicing Ideas Symposium
	1. Assignment: Not a class assignment but a review of our annual student symposium, Voicing Ideas, from submissions to the event itself.
	2. Method: The symposium invites students to submit papers written from upper division philosophy courses, and if selected they present them at an afternoon showcase. Faculty participate in blind review to select the best of the submissions. This assessment exercise had three parts.
		1. How many students submitted papers to the symposium?
		2. What was acceptance rate and reviewers’ comments about overall quality of submissions?
		3. How did speakers handle Q&A? How was student attendance and audience participation?
	3. Benchmarks:
		1. Submissions: We expect to receive 15 submissions, which would be approximately 10% of all philosophy majors plus a few extra for minors and those enrolled in upper division GE courses.
		2. Review: We expect that choosing participants should be difficult. That at least two thirds (or 10) should be marked acceptable or higher and probably 5 should be solid yeses – and yet we might not have time for 5 students to present in one event. Only 1/3, or 5 essays, should be ranked unacceptable.
		3. Event: We expect that students in the audience are able to ask questions of the speakers and that the speakers can respond to both student and faculty questions for the 10+ minutes allocated for Q&A for each speaker.
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| 1. **What did you discover?**
2. PHIL 20

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|  | **PHIL LO1** | **AVERAGE** |  | **PHIL LO 2** | **AVERAGE** |
|  | Paper 1 | 2 |  | Paper 1 | 2 |
|  | Paper 2 | 2.25 |  | Paper 2 | 3 |
|  | Paper 3 | 2.5 |  | Paper 3 | 3.5 |
|  | Paper 4 | 2.5 |  | Paper 4 | 3 |
|  | Paper 5 | 2.5 |  | Paper 5 | 2.5 |
|  | Paper 6 | 3 |  | Paper 6 | 3.5 |
|  | Paper 7 | 3 |  | Paper 7 | 2.5 |
|  | Paper 8 | 2 |  | Paper 8 | 2 |
|  | Paper 9 | 2.5 |  | Paper 9 | 2 |
|  | Paper 10 | 2.5 |  | Paper 10 | 2 |

* For LO1 we are near the benchmark, with 8 above a 2 but only 2 of them are 3s and none are 4s. But nothing is below 2. And for LO2 we are even closer to the benchmark as 6 are above a 2, including two that are above a 3 and none below 2.
* For the GE LO we are still a bit below the benchmark but only insofar as none scored a 4 (but one did average 3.5). None scored below a 2 which indicates that everyone is at least adequate in achieving the GE learning outcome and 8 of the 10 were beyond adequate.
* Readers found that the students were quite good at being able to state which side of an ethical debate they and a person they interviewed were on and could tell clearly when there was disagreement between them. They could state some reasons in support of that position too and had some subtlety to tell when positions agreed but reasoning didn’t, which is a hallmark of philosophical thinking.
* Further, students were able to identify which class readings most closely coincided with their own and their partners’ positions and reasonings. However, they rarely elaborated on those readings or the historical ideas. Maybe it was the length of space permitted by the assignment that prohibited detail in this case. But for an introductory level class earning GE credit, the students demonstrated meaningful understanding of a range of ethical viewpoints and a proper relationship between premises and conclusions as well as objections and replies.
* Lastly we noted that the overall quality of the writing in these papers was really excellent, better than we see in some major class. The students did well to craft grammatically correct, clear sentences and coherent paragraphs. They managed to stay on topic and communicate effectively on a wide range of ethical dilemmas.
* We suspect this will be an assignment that lingers in their memories as may wrote about how meaningful the conversation was, especially since most chose to interview someone important to them. The lasting impact of this assignment is impossible to measure right now and hard to do in the future, but we think this is probably a more significant learning outcome than the ones designated to assess. Engaging in discussions of ethical values is not easy, and these students not only did that but completed a writing assignment that helps to give them a clear, lasting impression of ethical concepts and values as well as practice engaging in open-minded, civil discussion.
1. PHIL 170T

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| LO 2 | C | J | T | A |  |  | None averaged a 1, with the closet 1.875.But none were solid 4, only 2 averaged slightly above 3. Most were between adequate and good.  |
| Paper 1 | 2 | 2 | 2.0 | 2 | 2 |  |
| Paper 2 | 2 | 3 | 3.0 | 3 | 2.75 |  |
| Paper 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.0 | 2 | 2.75 |  |
| Paper 4 | 3 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 2.625 |  |
| Paper 5 | 4 | 3 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.375 |  |
| Paper 6 | 4 | 3 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.375 |  |
| Paper 7 | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2.125 |  |
| Paper 8 | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2.125 |  |
| Paper 9 | 2 | 1 | 3.5 | 3 | 2.375 |  |
| Paper 10 | 2 | 1 | 2.5 | 2 | 1.875 |  |
|  | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.85 | 2.5 |  |  |

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| LO 3 | C  | J | T | A |  |  | None averaged a 1.But none were solid 4. One is close at 3.625 and another is above three. But just a third is at 3. Seven are 2 or between 2 and 3.  |
| Paper 1 | 2 | 2 | 3.0 | 2 | 2.25 |  |
| Paper 2 | 2 | 3 | 3.0 | 2 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 3 | 3 | 4 | 3.0 | 2 | 3 |  |
| Paper 4 | 3 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 2.625 |  |
| Paper 5 | 4 | 4 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.625 |  |
| Paper 6 | 4 | 2 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.125 |  |
| Paper 7 | 2 | 2 | 3.0 | 3 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 8 | 2 | 2 | 3.0 | 3 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 9 | 2 | 1 | 3.5 | 3 | 2.375 |  |
| Paper 10 | 2 | 2 | 3.5 | 3 | 2.625 |  |
|  | 2.6 | 2.4 | 3.15 | 2.7 |  |  |

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| LO 4 | C  | J | T | A |  |  | None averaged a 1.All were 2.5 or higher. Six were above a three, yet none averaged a solid 4.  |
| Paper 1 | 3 | 3 | 4.0 | 4 | 3.5 |  |
| Paper 2 | 2 | 2 | 4.0 | 2 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 3 | 3 | 4 | 4.0 | 2 | 3.25 |  |
| Paper 4 | 2 | 1 | 3.0 | 4 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 5 | 4 | 4 | 3.0 | 3 | 3.5 |  |
| Paper 6 | 4 | 3 | 3.0 | 4 | 3.5 |  |
| Paper 7 | 2 | 1 | 4.0 | 3 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 8 | 3 | 4 | 4.0 | 3 | 3.5 |  |
| Paper 9 | 2 | 2 | 4.0 | 2 | 2.5 |  |
| Paper 10 | 2 | 4 | 4.0 | 3 | 3.25 |  |
|  | 2.7 | 2.8 | 3.7 | 3 |  |  |

* For LO 4 we basically met the benchmarks, LO 3 came close, and LO 2 fell a bit shorter than we expected. Overall, we are satisfied that every student is at least adequate in every area, yet too few are excellent, and some areas fall entirely short of excellence.
* As a senior seminar final project, the strong demonstrations of LO4 are important to a philosophy major. The variety of topics chosen by students indicated a wide range of inquiry and discussion in their educations and lives, and the open-minded thoughtfulness of the papers struck the assessors with pride in our students’ considerations of viewpoints other than their own.
* Many students engaged with difficult texts and ideas carefully and wrote these longer papers – 15-20 pages – in ways that maintained a coherent topic. Students are generally able to do the very things that an education in philosophy expects of them; although, we still wish that more of them were better at weaving together textual interpretation and analysis rather than over-emphasizing summary of others’ views. And while there were generally clear theses for each paper, students weren’t as able to manage tight organization and argumentation toward the thesis, often including some extraneous pieces or getting too focused on one part of an argument to the exclusion of other relevant points.
* The style and grammar of many of the papers was far below what we expected from final papers in a senior seminar. Less than a worry about general ability in this area still at this end stage of their education, we worry that students are not spending adequate time drafting and revising these papers in advance of the due dates.

 1. PHIL 199

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|   | Score 1 | Score 2 | Score 3 | Score 4 | Score 5 | Score 6 | **AVERAGE**  |
| Paper 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | **2.83** |
| Paper 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | **2.67** |
| Paper 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | **2.00** |
| Paper 4 | 1 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 2 | 1.5 | **1.50** |
| Paper 5 | 2.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | **2.83** |
| Paper 6 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | **2.33** |
| Paper 7 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | **3.00** |
| Paper 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | **2.83** |

* There was a range of faculty scores but averages revealed that we are below our benchmark. While there was only a smattering of 1s throughout and only one that averaged below a 2, there were none that averaged above 3. All but one were adequate, with some close to good. But none were excellent.
* Faculty noted that all were able to reference concepts, ideas, and often thinkers too, from the philosophy curriculum, yet most of the references were rather shallow. Names and ideas were mentioned and dropped in. Few offered elaboration or definition of the concepts and ideas and how they were used in their internship or where they came from into the philosophy curriculum.
* What was interesting to note was how many students identified logic and critical thinking as most important to their internship success. The next most frequently referenced class or concepts was ethics, with a few other courses, questions, and thinkers including in limited numbers.
* Overall, the essays – while reflecting clear writing – were a bit shallow, answering the four required prompts but rarely doing much more to put together all the reflection on the questions into a more coherent and considered single essays.
1. Voicing Ideas Symposium
2. Submissions:
	1. Our submission rate was a little below the benchmark, but markedly higher than the previous two years. We received 9 of the 15 expected submissions. Although, these were from 8 students, as one person submitted two papers (on the recommendation of two faculty members).
	2. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are afraid to submit, afraid their papers aren’t good enough to be accepted, even if they earned A grades on them in their courses. And afraid to present the paper publicly if they are selected.
3. Review:
	1. Our acceptance rate was above the benchmark. This year we accepted five to present. We squeezed the time slots to make it work since five really were worthy. Actually, six were clearly worthy but the student who submitted two papers had two solid yesses and was invited to present only one of them.
	2. Further, two of the papers that were not accepted included some that were of high quality writing and thinking but were not in philosophy or were not in an argumentative style of writing most suitable to this symposium.
	3. The diversity of papers was an excellent reflection of the major and the options within the major in that we say law, religion, and traditional philosophy represented as well as ethics, history, environment, technology, education, and the meaning of life questions engaged.
4. Event: This was extremely successful, although one present withdrew the week of the symposium for personal reasons.
	1. All four presenters had thoughtful, engaging papers that generated good questions from the audience, and mostly from students in the audience, and they both did very well with their responses to the questions.
	2. The presenters represented not only the diversity of Fresno State but of the philosophy department, with half women and one person of color. The audience too was nicely representative of the diversity of the program and the university.
	3. Attendance at the event was very good.
		1. between 30 and 35 students, including some from Fresno City College
		2. 6 philosophy faculty & staff
		3. 10-15 family and community members
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| 1. **What changes did you make as a result of the data?**
2. PHIL 20

We fell a little below our benchmark, but we also found the students’ work overall to be well done and well written. Some work remains for the department faculty to clarify for ourselves not only our benchmarks but also our criteria for evaluating the scoring of the papers, particularly with regard to questions of how much depth and detail is necessary to be willing to assess students as excellent or whether a breadth of knowledge is preferable, especially at the introductory levels, even if that makes measuring between good and excellent difficult. 1. PHIL 170T

If we are correct that assessment would have been likely to meet benchmarks if students took more time to write, then there is only so much that we can do to change that. Some instructors require, even grade, first drafts of papers or give extra credit to students who go to the Writing Center. We are adding another W course in our department, which can further emphasize the importance of writing and writing skills to a philosophy degree.  1. PHIL 199
* Since we have recently revised the logic requirements but plan to discuss long-term other changes for logic and critical thinking, we should bear in mind that the students are using this in their decision-making, in their writing, and in their analysis of legal cases for these internships. And we ought to think about analogous situations for other careers for all three options in our major.
* We are also about to undertake consideration of prerequisite requirements in all the major options, so noticing that some papers admitted to having had very little philosophy before the summer internship work before their senior year, this ought to be a factor in our revisions.
* We could consider means for getting students to take more seriously seeking more depth of analysis in much of their writing and in designing assignments that require more citations or explicit textual analysis more frequently too.

 1. Voicing Ideas Symposium
* We hope the increase in papers is due in some part to the attempts of the faculty to better model these events ourselves through our renewed Faculty Colloquium, which we should continue. We should also continue to include in our syllabuses and class announcements notes about which assignments might be appropriate for submission, as that seems to have been successful for some students.
* We could consider again adding formal commentators for each paper as another way to involve newer students to practice participating before they submit for full participation.
* We could open it up to students from all over Fresno County, even to the Community College district, for more submissions and to encourage our students to compete and interact with other students. This was the practice in the somewhat recent past; we could bring it back.
* We could create and collect an audience assessment/evaluation form.
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| 1. **What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2017-2018 AY?**

We will assess PHIL 25 and/or PHIL 45, which was scheduled for this academic year but got pushed back because of curriculum changes coming from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and changes to articulation agreements with community colleges over pre-law students. Continues to assess PHIL 170T, 199, and Voicing Ideas We would like to determine a way to assess separately and comparatively the three options in the major (general philosophy, pre-law, and religious studies) in the courses they most commonly share. We might focus some assessment on the large format intro level classes (Phil 1, Phil 2, Phil 10, Phil 20) happening more regularly now.  |
| 1. **What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?**
2. Revise SOAP
	1. Still underway
3. Look more closely at Religious Studies Option and all Department Major requirements, focusing on reviewing our major advising practices.
	1. We clarified for ourselves – and for the new CAH Advisors – the major and the sorts of regular misunderstandings that arise for students. We discussed the most common barriers to students completing the program and ways to advise students early so as to best overcome or avoid those barriers.
	2. We still plan to use Phil Club to survey students about major advising, about their needs and preferences, what’s working and what’s not, especially with the CAH Advising Center now firmly established.
	3. We lost a faculty in Religious Studies, so our priority became a new hire. This, though, prompted careful discussion about the fire so as to not only ensure teaching coverage but have this new hire fit into the overall curriculum of the philosophy major.
	4. We have been focusing on our Learning Outcomes being shared across all in the major, that covers three options and maintaining the coherence of one philosophy major with three options for emphasis.
4. Hire in Philosophy of Science
	1. We did this.
	2. Our new faculty member can explore the pros and cons for themselves and the students to increase our participation in the Cognitive Science Program but they will teach related courses in our department and in GE.
5. Develop a department colloquium, to increase collegiality and model for students the activities of an intellectual community.
	1. We did this – had three lectures last year, with some student attendance.
	2. We are continuing this year and hoping that the more it is established, the more student attendance we’ll see
	3. We have also focused on Directed Readings with groups of faculty and students: four last year, one already beginning, and a couple more in the works.

**Additional Guidelines:** If you have not fully described the assignment then please attach a copy of the questions or assignment guidelines. If you are using a rubric and did not fully describe this rubric (or the criteria being used) than please attach a copy of the rubric. If you administered a survey please consider attaching a copy of the survey so that the Learning Assessment Team (LAT) can review the questions. |