



**PhD Program in Health Care Ethics
Annual Program Assessment Report
2021-2022**

I. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, ASSESSMENT METHODS AND RESULTS

Program Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the foundational disciplines, methods, topics and issues in health care ethics required for scholarly analysis of issues in the field.

2021-2022 *Relevant Assessment Methods:*

- (1) Student participation in required coursework: HCE6010, HCE6020, HCE6040, HCE6130 and HCE 6140 (percentage out of 62 total courses-taken in years FA20-SP22).

	Remember and Understand	Apply and Analyze	Demeanor and Respectfulness
	Student is able to recall and explain facts and basic concepts.	Student is able to draw conclusions among ideas and apply information in new situations.	Student is a respectful and charitable interlocutor.
Meets standards	94%	86%	95%
Approaches standards	5%	11%	5%
Fails Standards	1%	3%	0%

- (2) Student performance on final normative research papers in coursework: HCE6010, HCE6020, HCE6040, HCE6130 and HCE 6140 (percentage out of 61 total student papers in years FA20-SP22).

	Problem and Significance	Development of Argument	Integration of Literature	Writing Style and Form
	Question or problem is normative, sets up an argumentative essay, is significant within the field of health care ethics, is novel and the thesis is clearly and succinctly articulated and easy to identify.	Paper adopts and articulates primarily one normative lens or method; clearly defends a conclusion; provides relevant and convincing evidence and reasoning to support the conclusion; avoids fallacies; engages most significant objections.	Paper demonstrates familiarity with the most recent and relevant literature on the topic; uses literature appropriately to support the argument; organizes literature in new and useful ways; uses references	Paper avoids vagueness, grammatical errors, poor word choice, awkward phrasing; uses a common citation style skillfully; constructs a coherent essay that transitions well between ideas and sections;

			adequately to support claims; characterizes the claims of others accurately and charitably.	is written with clarity and precision.
Meets standards	93%	67%	79%	95%
Approaches standards	7%	28%	20%	5%
Fails Standards	0%	5%	1%	0%

(3) Student performance on oral comprehensive exam: (percentage out of 9 students sitting the oral comprehensive exam in years FA20-SP22).

	Remember and Understand	Apply and Analyze	Demeanor and Respectfulness
	Student is able to recall and explain facts and basic concepts.	Student is able to draw conclusions among ideas and apply information in new situations.	Student is a respectful and charitable interlocutor.
Meets standards	89%	89%	100%
Approaches standards	0%	0%	0%
Fails Standards	11%	11%	0%

Program Learning Outcome 4: Demonstrate the ability to conceptualize, develop and bring to successful completion an original, sustained and coherent independent research project that contributes to the field (i.e. the dissertation).

2021-2022 Relevant Assessment Methods:

- (1) This proficiency is assessed primarily by the student’s dissertation committee, which examine the quality of the student’s written product (dissertation) and their ability to defend their project to an interdisciplinary audience (dissertation defense).
 - *Written Dissertation:* 6/7 students “Passed with Distinction” and 1/7 students “Passed”.
 - *Oral Dissertation Defense:* 6/7 students “Passed with Distinction” and 1/7 students “Passed”.

II. FINDINGS AND CLOSING THE LOOP: CURRENT ASSESSMENT

- A.** *When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?*
The 2021-2022 PhD Program Assessment Report was presented to the Health Care Ethics graduate faculty at the annual faculty retreat August 16, 2022, spending approximately 45 minutes discussing the findings.
- B.** *How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program?*

- Most of the 2021-2022 assessment report findings meet our goals and are consistent with previous years' reports. However, the "development of argument" criteria under SLO #1 had a higher percentage of students "approaching" and "failing" standards than is typical, and thus this was the focus of the faculty discussion. The department will implement the following strategies to aid student development in this area: (1) additional mentoring sessions on writing skills and argument development, (2) additional writing assignments in PhD coursework that require students to distill normative arguments into 1500-word and 300-word formats. Individual remediation strategies for students "failing" this standard include: (1) weekly writing assignments summarizing the primary argument in readings, (2) regular meetings with instructors about paper topics and arguments, and (3) individualized study of an argument formation text.
- In addition, the graduate faculty has approved a new continuation standard (cumulative GPA of 3.5) as well as a new "warning" system by which faculty are able to identify students who are not yet in violation of the continuation standard, but are at risk. These students are identified in end of semester evaluations, and depending on the needs of the individual student, they are offered the strategies mentioned above. This new system will go into place beginning Fall 2022.

III. FINDINGS AND CLOSING THE LOOP: PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

1. New Elective Structure: Previous assessment data (as well as this year's data) showed that students sometimes struggled with the "development of argument" criteria under PLO #2 "Demonstrate a proficiency in formulating original, normative arguments on topics related to health care ethics". The graduate faculty hypothesized that this may be because some PhD students lack concentrated study in a primary discipline (philosophy, theology, social sciences, law, etc.) via a Masters degree in one of these fields, and thus struggle to deploy discipline-specific methodologies toward the goal of original normative bioethics arguments. Thus, the curriculum "elective" categories were changed from requiring 12 credit hours of any elective course, to requiring 12 credit hours in each of two elective categories: "Disciplinary Lens" (which requires concentrated coursework in a primary disciplinary methodology), and "Bioethics Content", which covers other, non-methodological content related to bioethics. Students with a MA degree may count up to 12 hours total as advanced standing toward these requirements.
2. New Continuation Standard and Warning System: The graduate faculty approved a new continuation standard (3.5 cumulative GPA) for our PhD students, as well as the "warning" system described above (in II.B.).

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

1. New Elective Structure will be assessed using the normative paper and written comprehensive exam assessments of cohorts that matriculate with these new requirements.
2. New Continuation Standard and Warning System will be assessed using the methods of assessment for SLO 1 and SLO 2.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Neither change has been in effect long enough to observe the longitudinal performance of students matriculating under the new elective structure.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

As we monitor student performance in developing original and well-formulated arguments in the normative paper assignments and written comprehensive exams, we will note the disciplinary background

of the student and the elective courses taken. With this information, students will be mentored in a more targeted manner when selecting electives.