

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Master's	Department: Philosophy
Degree or Certificate Level: MA	College/School: CAS
Date (Month/Year): 9/22	Primary Assessment Contact: Scott Ragland
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2021-22	
In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2015	

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?
The ones on the far left column of the below rubric:

Learning Outcome	Fails to Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1. Students will gather sources relevant to a philosophical problem.	Student fails to include necessary sources for the topic or includes irrelevant sources.	Student includes all and only relevant primary and secondary sources, and accurately interprets those writings. The student's paper is a good snapshot of the current state of discussion.	Student includes groundbreaking research into primary sources or synthesizes information in novel ways that advance the current discussion of the topic.
2. Students will interpret sources relevant to that philosophical problem.	Student significantly misinterprets sources	Student's interpretation of sources is accurate and plausible on all significant points.	Student offers a compelling interpretation of sources that is novel or groundbreaking in some way.
3. Students will synthesize sources relevant to that philosophical problem.	Student's synthesis misrepresents the current state of the debate on the topic or fails to adequately connect to the student's defense of own position.	Thesis presents an accurate, unified snapshot of the current state of discussion about a philosophical problem in a way that motivates the student's own argument.	Thesis portrays the current state of discussion in a way that is not only accurate and unified, but also novel—opening up new possibilities for research or argument. The student's own position draws on this portrayal.
4. Students will argue for a philosophical thesis pertaining to that philosophical problem.	Student's thesis is not sufficiently clear, or is not sufficiently related to the focal philosophical problem, or is not sufficiently supported by an argument.	Student articulates and argues for a thesis related to the focal philosophical problem.	Student's thesis or argument is sufficiently original, innovative or excellent as to constitute a publishable contribution to existing literature on the subject.
5. Students will defend their thesis.	Student fails to consider or respond to relevant criticisms, or offers only a superficial or facile response.	Student considers relevant objections and provides rigorous responses.	Student's responses to objections are unusually insightful or novel.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

The plan was to collect one artefact for each graduating MA student from one of the following sources: (1) philosophy MA theses (related to PHIL 5900), or (2) Jesuit "De U" project papers (related to PHIL 5800), (3) a research paper from

a course from the student's final semester in the MA program. These courses are all offered in St. Louis at the north campus.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tool(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Supervising faculty score the student work against a google form version of the rubric. Results are collected and evaluated by department chair in the process of writing this report, and the results are discussed at a faculty meeting (this year the meeting occurred on Sept. 9, 2022).

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

5 MA students graduated this year and feedback forms were completed by faculty for 1 of those students. The results are attached if you want to look at the details. Here is a summary.

An average of around 2 suggests that majors are on average achieving the desired learning outcomes. Here are the average results for the 5 outcomes on the senior inquiry rubric for this year as compared to last year:

	20/21 Academic Year	21/22 Academic Year
Gathers Sources:	No data	2
Interprets Sources:	No data	2
Synthesizes Sources:	No data	2
Argues for Thesis:	No data	2
Defends Thesis:	No data	2

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Conclusions: Insufficient data to draw robust conclusions. No reasons to worry about program efficacy, but also little basis for confidence.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

These results were discussed at a faculty meeting on Sept. 9, 2022, where we focused on the question of faculty participation. We addressed the possible causes of the problem and also agreed on a possible solution. During the meeting, two sources of the low faculty participation became clear. First, a single faculty member identified himself as being involved with several of the masters-level capstone projects, and said that he did not complete the assessment surveys when prompted because he views them as "onerous". Second, a more fundamental structural problem emerged. In recent years the task of remembering to prompt faculty to complete assessment surveys has belonged to the chair alone (with help from the department admin—when the chair remembers to ask for it). Because the time for prompting is near the end of term, a time typically extremely busy for department chairs (as for all faculty), the chair has not been reliable at remembering to prompt all relevant faculty. The solution that emerged in the meeting (see next section) is to expand the pool of people who share responsibility for assessment, making the system less prone to fail due to one person's forgetfulness.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For

example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The solution we are implementing for this year: the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, Chair, and department administrator will meet during the last week of classes to discuss and identify exactly which steps need to be taken to gather assessment data, and to divide out duties among the three of them. By spreading the labor around, this plan makes the job easier to carry out in a hectic time, and by having three people reminded to start planning instead of just one, the system is less fragile. This meeting has already been scheduled for fall 22 and will be scheduled in advance every semester going forward. After the chair, CGS, and admin meet, they will identify relevant faculty and make sure they have the rubric surveys before they start grading, and are aware of the need to complete them while they are reviewing the student work anyway. This will make the data gathering even more efficient because faculty will not have to read student work twice (once for grading, then later for assessment). For purposes of assessing the MA program, "relevant faculty" will be **all the philosophy instructors of the MA student during their final term** of the program. This will ensure assessment by (in most cases) more than one professor of more than one student artifact at a mature stage of the student's development in the program.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

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

We changed our approach to gathering assessment data in 19/20, and got a good data set for the first time for the MA program in that cycle. However, due to logistical problems, that same program was not implemented in 20/21 and so we had no data for that cycle. Data-gathering changes made last year got us an improvement over 20/21, but results were not as good as 19/20.

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

They are assessed in the process of writing this report, including at the department meeting where the draft report was discussed.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Although we have developed a good rubric/survey, we have struggled to use the rubric to gather data. We have taken steps to ensure data is gathered for 22/23. In last year's assessment cycle, we modified the plan to include *all* MA students, not just those completing capstones (5800 or 5900), though as already stated we did not properly implement the plan.

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

We will implement the plan described above in 6B.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.

Master's Program Assessment Rubric

As you grade the MA student's final paper, please assess the student's work along the dimensions below.

Student Name

En Suan Lian

Professor Name (You)

J. C. Marler

Number and Title of the Course for which student did the work you are assessing. *

PHIL 6400-01: Ancient Philosophy - Plotinus

Term and Year

Fall 2021

LOC #1: Did the student gather sources relevant to a philosophical problem?

- Meets Expectations: Student includes all and only relevant primary and secondary sources and accurately interprets those writings. The student's paper is a good snapshot of the current state of discussion.
- Fails to Meet Expectations: Student fails to include necessary sources for the topic or includes irrelevant sources.
- Exceeds Expectations: Student includes groundbreaking research into primary sources or synthesizes information in novel ways that advance the current discussion of the topic.

LOC#2: Did the student interpret sources relevant to a philosophical problem?

- Meets Expectations: Student's interpretation of sources is accurate and plausible on all significant points.
- Fails to Meet Expectations: Student significantly misinterprets sources
- Exceeds Expectations: Student offers a compelling interpretation of sources that is novel or groundbreaking in some way.

LOC#3: Did the student synthesize sources relevant to a philosophical problem?

- Meets Expectations: Thesis presents an accurate, unified snapshot of the current state of discussion and the student's own argument clearly draws on or relates to this snapshot.
- Fails to Meet Expectations: Student's synthesis misrepresents the current state of the debate on the topic or fails to adequately connect to the student's defense of own position.
- Exceeds Expectations: Thesis portrays the current state of discussion in a way that is not only accurate and unified, but also novel—opening up new possibilities for research or argument. The student's own position draws on this portrayal.

LOC#4: Did the student argue for a philosophical thesis pertaining to the above philosophical problem?

- Meets Expectations: Student articulates and argues for a thesis related to the focal philosophical problem.
- Fails to Meet Expectations: Student's thesis is not sufficiently clear, or is not sufficiently related to the focal philosophical problem, or is not sufficiently supported by an argument.
- Exceeds Expectations: Student's thesis or argument is sufficiently original, innovative or excellent as to constitute a publishable contribution to existing literature on the subject.

LOC#5: Did the student defend their thesis against objections? *

- Meets Expectations: Student considers relevant objections and provides rigorous responses.
- Fails to Meet Expectations: Student fails to consider or respond to relevant criticisms, or offers only a superficial or facile response.
- Exceeds Expectations: Student's responses to objections are unusually insightful or novel.

Do you have any further comments to add regarding the student's work in this, their final term?
Are there structures of our program that you think impeded or significantly advanced the student's development?

Fr. Steven is most insightful and argues exceedingly well. He makes excellent use of primary and secondary source-materials for addressing an issue that is specifically philosophical. Because Fr. Steven was not defending a thesis, LOC#5 is irrelevant.

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