

California State University, Stanislaus

**PROGRAM ASSESSMENT ANNUAL UPDATE**

**PROGRAM NAME: Philosophy**

**COLLEGE YEAR: 2008-2009**

**PLAN OVERVIEW:**

1: Direct assessment of learning objective “contextual knowledge of the history of philosophy” which is part of our learning goal 2: “Improve understanding of significant developments and ideas in the history of Western philosophy:” We planned to assess those courses in which this learning goal has high priority. Such courses are Phil 2200 “Ancient Philosophy,” Phil 2230 “Modern Philosophy,” Phil 3100 “Introduction to Continental Philosophy.” In fall 2008 started discussing whether to include a fourth course namely Phil 4200 “Advanced Studies in the History of Philosophy” and tentatively planned to assess this course in spring 2009.

2. Indirect assessment of all our learning goals: We decided to work on an entry and an exit questionnaire for our majors. We planned to work on the exit questionnaire in spring 2009 and have it ready for our graduating majors in summer 2009.

**DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS:**

1. We met a number of times in fall 2008 and developed an assessment matrix (see attachment A) for learning objective “contextual knowledge in the history of philosophy”. We came up with a number of objectives and developed a matrix with specific questions that address these objectives. Answers to these questions need to be filled out by the instructor. As for the test questions the students need to answer (either in a test or in a paper), we decided that it was necessary to leave it up to each faculty member teaching the course.

There was only one course that addressed our chosen learning objective in the fall 2008 (Phil 2200) and data were collected for that course. During a meeting in spring 2009, we took a first look at the outcome of the assessment. As we looked at the outcome of the assessment of learning goal “knowledge of the history of philosophy,” the general consensus was that, at this point, it seemed to be of very limited use to us in terms of assessing student learning. The rubric we had worked out tried to take into account the impossibility of standardizing questions in a meaningful way due to the diversity of teaching methods and curriculum content that we value in our department. The results we got in terms of students meeting our learning objectives did not tell us more than what we already would know: that the students did learn what they were supposed to in class; something that appears to be assessed by regular grading of homework and tests anyways. We thus tried to reflect again on what our main goals of student learning are and how we could assess student learning in a meaningful way for us, which means, in a way that does not try to reproduce assessment measures that appear to work only for

learning objectives that can be quantitatively measured. We reflected on the fact that what is most important to us is that our students learn to analyze texts carefully, to reflect critically on the course material, and to do that as clearly as possible in their writing. This gave us a new idea for direct assessment: Instead of giving our students standardized tests with test questions, we would require them (at different times of their studies) to analyze a text and raise some critical questions with respect to it. At a second meeting in spring 2009, we decided to postpone the development of a new assessment method to the next academic year, and to proceed as planned with the assessment of “knowledge in the history of philosophy.” We will gather to discuss the findings at the beginning of the fall semester.

2. We (mostly the PAC) developed and finalized an entry and exit questionnaire that took as a model questionnaires available through the APA (American Philosophical Association) website. We revised the questionnaire so that it would address all the major learning objectives in our program as well as other issues meaningful to us as a department (see attachment B). We will begin sending out our exit questionnaire to graduating students.

### **CHANGES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING**

Since we still need to collect data, we were not ready to discuss whether we need to make changes in student learning and if so, what these changes should be.

Attachment A:

**Assessment of teaching objective “Knowledge of the history of Philosophy”**

Philosophy Major’s name \_\_\_\_\_

Year at college (for example: junior) \_\_\_\_\_

Course in which the student was evaluated \_\_\_\_\_

Philosophers that were taught in this course \_\_\_\_\_

Semester and year in which the student was evaluated \_\_\_\_\_

A) General sense of the time period in which a philosopher wrote, especially in relation to other important figures in the history of philosophy:

I                      S                      G                      E

B) General sense of the importance of a philosopher for the history of philosophy before and after him/her:

I                      S                      G                      E

C) Knowledge of some major philosophical problems in the historical period addressed by the course:

I                      S                      G                      E

D) Knowledge of some major ideas and concepts in the historical period addressed by the course:

I                      S                      G                      E

E) Detailed work with the text related to the historically relevant problems, ideas, and concepts addressed in the course:

I                      S                      G                      E

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Key: I = insufficient; S = sufficient; G = good; E = excellent

**Attachment:** Assignments related to the evaluation criteria A-E.  
(Student’s tests or papers are available upon request.)

**Note:** As a department, we agreed that the method of direct assessment needs to be flexible and not standardized for all our courses where knowledge of the history of philosophy has major importance. However all assessment methods (test questions or assignment of papers) need to address the above assessment criteria.

Attachment B:

PHILOSOPHY MAJOR ENTRANCE INTERVIEW FORM (DRAFT)

Welcome to the Philosophy Department! Each student meets with the Chair of the Department on his or her declaration of the major in Philosophy. Please complete this form prior to your meeting with the Chair.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student I.D. \_\_\_\_\_

Local address \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Philosophy Courses already completed or currently taking	When Taken	Instructor	Grade
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

1. Anticipated date of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have (or intend to have) a double major? If so, what is your other major?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you have (or intend to have) a minor in another field? If so, what is it?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Estimated overall grade point average: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Why did you choose to major in philosophy? Please be specific: for example, was it a previous course (which?), instructor (who?), interest in the area (which?), career plans (what?) etc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you hope to gain from a Philosophy major?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you be interested to be active in a philosophy club? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which courses or areas of study in Philosophy are you especially looking forward to?  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What information can the Department provide now which might be helpful to you (information about the discipline, graduate school, philosophy in pre-law and pre-med programs, careers, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### PHILOSOPHY MAJOR EXIT INTERVIEW FORM

Each Philosophy major meets with the Chair of the Department of Philosophy in his or her final semester prior to graduation. Please complete the Exit Interview Form and bring it with you to your meeting with the Department Chair. Thank you and congratulations on your graduation!

#### Section I

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student I.D. \_\_\_\_\_

Local address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Permanent address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of graduation \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated overall grade point average \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated grade point average in the major \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have another major besides Philosophy? If so, what is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you minor in other fields? If so, which? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section II

For each of the following questions, circle one of the numbers. Then briefly explain your answer.

Use the following scale:

- 1: strongly disagree
- 2: disagree
- 3: neutral
- 4: agree
- 5: strongly agree

1. As a philosophy major, I gained knowledge about some main philosophers in the history of philosophy. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I have an in-depth knowledge of at least two major thinkers in the history of philosophy (say which ones) and can explain some of their main ideas and concepts. 1 2 3 4 5
3. As a philosophy major, I gained knowledge about different periods in the history philosophy and the philosophers of these different periods. I am able to name several of philosophers from the history of philosophy and can explain some changes and developments that happened in the history of philosophy. 1 2 3 4 5
4. The Philosophy program made me aware of contemporary issues and questions especially in Continental Philosophy. (Give some examples.) 1 2 3 4 5
5. As a philosophy major, I gained a sense of the complexity of philosophical ideas and how these ideas change through time. I am able to articulate this complexity at least with respect to a few concepts (for example, “essence,” “subject,” “knowledge,” “phenomenon,” “truth,” “mind-body relation,” “ethical principles,”...). 1 2 3 4 5
6. My ability to read philosophical texts has improved significantly since I entered the program. 1 2 3 4 5
7. The philosophy program taught me how to read a philosophical text carefully and to analyze the problems and ideas these texts treat. I am able to outline the main line of thought in a philosophical text and can problematize some of its ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My ability to write philosophical papers has improved significantly since I entered the philosophy program. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I know how to frame and develop a philosophical issue in writing. (Name an example of a paper you wrote.) 1 2 3 4 5
10. I have a basic knowledge in logical thinking and argumentation. I can explain what an argument is and can identify different kinds of argumentative strategies. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I can recognize, compare, and contrast different philosophical positions. (Identify a philosophical issue and two philosophers who have taken positions with respect to this issue, which you could compare and contrast.) 1 2 3 4 5
12. The Philosophy program taught me to reflect on my own way of thinking and helped me question the presuppositions at work in my own thought. 1 2 3 4 5
13. The Philosophy program taught me to reflect on value questions. (Give an example of a value question that has really engaged you.) 1 2 3 4 5

14. The Philosophy program opened my mind to different perspectives that inform value judgments (Say which perspectives.) 1 2 3 4 5

15. As a result of my studies in the Philosophy program, I feel inspired to read more philosophical texts. 1 2 3 4 5

### **Section III**

1. Why did you choose to major in Philosophy? Please be specific: for example, was it a particular course (which?), teacher (who?), interest in area (which?), career plans (what?), etc.

2. In what ways were your expectations of the philosophy major fulfilled (or not fulfilled) by your experiences? Please be specific.

3. Please comment on the quality of teaching in your Philosophy courses (overall rating, strong and weak points, etc.).

4. Please comment about the quality of advising in the Philosophy Department.

5. Did you find the Philosophy Department office to be friendly and accessible? Please comment.

6. In how many of your Philosophy courses did you write at least one paper? All, some, none? Did the philosophy classes you took with us improve your writing skills? What writing experiences were most and least helpful?

7. Did you attend any philosophy talks by our guest speakers? If so, did you consider this a valuable experience?

8. What are your short-term plans after graduation?

9. What are your long-range career/life plans and goals?

10. How do you expect your major in Philosophy to help you, either personally or professionally?

11. What do you consider the main strengths and weaknesses of the Philosophy program?

12. Any other comments?

Thank you!