

**Assurance of Student Learning  
2019-2020**

Potter College of Arts and Letters

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

745 - Philosophy

Merrall Price, Interim Dept. Head

*Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.*

**Student Learning Outcome 1:** Students will be able to effectively collect and analyze evidence in the discipline of Philosophy in support of a position.

**Instrument 1** | Direct: Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminar.

**Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.**

**Met**

**Not Met**

**Student Learning Outcome 2:** Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills appropriate for the discipline of philosophy.

**Instrument 1** | Direct: Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminars.

**Based on your results, highlight or circle whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.**

**Met**

**Not Met**

**Student Learning Outcome 3:** Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills in their written work.

**Instrument 1** | Direct: Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminars.

**Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.**

**Met**

**Not Met**

**PROGRAM SUMMARY :**

Program results were quite good (at at the ‘capstone’ [4] or ‘upper milestone’ [3] levels), even if our target percentages were not met in SLO-1 and SLO-3. This was because the target was high, and there was little room for variation. To remedy this constraint, we are slightly revising next year’s targets, to give ourselves more room for distinctions and adjustments.

## Student Learning Outcome 1

<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	Students will be able to effectively collect and analyze evidence in the discipline of Philosophy in support of a position.		
<b>Measurement Instrument 1</b>	Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminars.		
<b>Criteria for Student Success</b>	Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for <i>Inquiry and Analysis</i> , criteria for student success is capstone level (4) or upper milestone level (3) with respect to topic selection, existing knowledge, research, and/or views, analysis, and conclusion.		
<b>Program Success Target for this Measurement</b>	90%	<b>Percent of Program Achieving Target</b>	81%
<b>Methods</b>	Artifacts from two upper-level seminars were collected. Four seniors in each seminar who were majors were included in the initial pool (i.e, eight in all). Of these four (N=4) were randomly selected (two from <u>each</u> seminar). Identifiers were then removed and all papers read by three full-time faculty. Faculty met to discuss outcomes, compare scores, assign averages, and determine response.		
<b>Based on your results, highlight or circle whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.</b>		<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
<b><u>ACTIONS</u></b>			
<p>Because of the relatively small sample (four papers, selected from a pool of eight) and the high target figure, the success outcome in this category is lower than it might be. If we had aimed at the ‘upper milestone level’ (3), we would have had a 100% success rate. However, since we aimed at ‘capstone level’ (4) in setting our goal, the actual result is <b>81%</b>. This is below the 90% target sought, but only because the target is high both as to criterion used and percentage of students expected to achieve it. Also, the deviation from the expected percentage is based not on comparative performance of individual students but student achievement overall as reflected by the four artifacts.</p> <p>In the main, small improvements are possible in regard to structural and contextual factors, in some cases providing more associations and examples. Hence we intend this coming year to emphasize these features to students writing senior papers and theses. We will also make them more explicit, partly by drawing up general guidelines that leave less to chance or individual student practice.</p>			
<b><u>FOLLOW-UP</u></b>			
At the end of both Fall and Spring semesters, individual instructors will review senior papers and theses in the light of these guidelines, paying particular attention to the features tagged for improvement above. And they will collect this information for next year’s joint assessment exercise.			
<b><u>NEXT ASSESSMENT CYCLE PLAN</u></b>			
The Philosophy faculty will meet again at the end of next spring (2021), or early fall, to review SLOs using the designated instrument and artifacts, including the points where improvement was sought. Also, to give ourselves more room for distinctions, we are lowering our targets within each SLO to 80% and aim to have half our students come in at the capstone level (4) and half at the upper milestone level (3).			

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 1:** Students will be able to effectively collect and analyze evidence in the discipline of Philosophy in support of a position.

	Capstone (4)	Upper Milestone (3)	Lower Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Topic selection	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic within the study of philosophy that addresses potentially significant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable/doable topic within the study of philosophy that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic within the study of philosophy that while manageable/doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic within the study of philosophy that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views	Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus.
Conclusion	States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings.	The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings.	States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings.

## Student Learning Outcome 2

<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills appropriate for the discipline of philosophy.		
<b>Measurement Instrument 1</b>	Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminars.		
<b>Criteria for Student Success</b>	Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for <i>Written Communication</i> , criteria for student success is capstone level (4) or upper milestone level (3) with respect to content development, sources and evidence, and control of syntax and mechanics.		
<b>Program Success Target for this Measurement</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>Percent of Program Achieving Target</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Methods</b>	Artifacts from two upper-level seminars were collected. Four seniors in each seminar who were majors were included in the initial pool (i.e., eight in all). Of these four (N=4) were randomly selected (two from each seminar). Identifiers were then removed and all papers read by three full-time faculty. Faculty met to discuss outcomes, compare scores, assign averages, and determine response.		
<b>Based on your results, highlight or circle whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.</b>		<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
<b><u>ACTIONS</u></b> All four artifacts were exceptionally well written, conceptually articulate, and clearly expressed. Philosophical communications skills were very good.			
<b><u>FOLLOW-UP</u></b> See SLO-1 above.			
<b><u>NEXT ASSESSMENT CYCLE PLAN</u></b> See SLO-1 above.			

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 2:** Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills appropriate for the discipline of philosophy.

	Capstone (4)	Upper Milestone (3)	Lower Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and this shapes the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and this shapes the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate to philosophy and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within philosophy and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for philosophy and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The writing has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

<b>Student Learning Outcome 3</b>			
<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills in their written work.		
<b>Measurement Instrument 1</b>	Analysis of senior papers written in upper-level seminars.		
<b>Criteria for Student Success</b>	Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for <i>Critical Thinking</i> , criteria for student success is capstone level (4) or upper milestone level (3) with respect to explanation of issues, evidence, student's position, and conclusions and related outcomes.		
<b>Program Success Target for this Measurement</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>Percent of Program Achieving Target</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Methods</b>	Artifacts from two upper-level seminars were collected. Four seniors in each seminar who were majors were included in the initial pool (i.e., eight in all). Of these four (N=4) were randomly selected (two from each seminar). Identifiers were then removed and all papers read by three full-time faculty. Faculty met to discuss outcomes, compare scores, assign averages, and determine response.		
<b>Based on your results, highlight or circle whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.</b>			<b>Met</b>
<b>Not Met</b>			
<b>ACTIONS</b>			
<p>Because of the relatively small sample (four papers, selected from a pool of eight) and the high target figure, the success outcome in this category is lower than it might be. If we had aimed at the 'upper milestone level' (3), we would have had a 100% success rate. However, since we aimed at 'capstone level' (4) in setting our goal, the actual result is <b>81%</b>. This is below the 90% target sought, but only because that goal is high both as to criterion used and percentage of students expected to achieve it. As well, the deviation from the expected percentage is based not on comparative performance of individual students but student achievement overall as reflected by the four artifacts.</p> <p>In the main, small improvements are possible in regard to argument articulation and sequencing, specifically making stages and transitions more clear, and utilizing brief iterations to keep the reader abreast of the writer. We intend this coming year to emphasize such desiderata to all students who write senior papers and theses. We will also make them explicit by drawing up general guidelines that will leave less to chance or individual student practice.</p>			
<b><u>FOLLOW-UP</u></b>			
See SLO-1 above.			
<b><u>NEXT ASSESSMENT CYCLE PLAN</u></b>			
See SLO-1 above.			

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 3:** Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills in their written work.

	Capstone (4)	Upper Milestone (3)	Lower Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undertermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence: Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from sources with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Other points of views are synthesized.	Specific position takes into account the complexity of an issue, acknowledging other points of view.	Specific position acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position is stated, but simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.