Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

No “transformation of organizational culture” because none was needed. Assessment plan and procedures in place since 2000 revealed the need for improvement in ‘clear argumentative writing’ and in ‘identification of the precise issue.’ By 2002 the Department had approved the “Philosophy Department Writing Guidelines” and the “Grading Standards for Philosophy Papers” precisely as a consequence of what was learned via assessment.

Since 2008 the Department has been clarifying the assessment goals and improving procedures. This resulted in a 2011 policy requiring three writing samples from each major: ‘Threshold,’ ‘Intermediate,’ and ‘Capstone.’ The samples, taken over three different stages in the student’s career as a major will give us diachronic data on how well our learning goals are being met. Since the first program assessment in 2000 we have been able to compare graduating seniors from year to year. With this new process we will be able to compare graduating seniors as a group with their ‘previous selves’ – what they were like (again as a group) when they first declared the major. The three-stage assessment will also give us a more fine-grained picture of how to revise and revise requirements, improve courses and course assignments to meet the goals.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.

The following outcomes are not prioritized, but mutually entailed. Progress in achieving one outcome presupposes progress in achieving the others.

a) Demonstrate understanding of major historical and contemporary philosophical developments; demonstrate mastery in reading and analyzing philosophical texts.
b) Capacity to state a position (including positions not one’s own) clearly, neutrally, plausibly, and effectively; the capacity to distinguish the precise issue from other similar-appearing issues.

c) Show development in the capacity to argue for a position, marshal support by synthesizing detailed information from relevant sources; demonstrate facility for devising original arguments and criticisms.

d) In particular, to show a refined capacity for ethical argumentation: an ability to apply ethical principles to complex hypothetical cases, as well as the synthetic capacity to extract relevant ethical principles from such cases.

3. For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

Outcome (a) falls under ‘Competence in the Disciplines,’ since it involves mastery of the competencies and values in a major field of study, philosophy. It also falls under “Knowledge of Human Cultures,” since the history of philosophy is a basic field in the humanities, engaged with ‘big questions, contemporary and enduring.’

Outcome (b) falls under ‘Intellectual and Practical Skills’: analysis and philosophical thinking, as well as written and oral communication.

Outcome (c) also falls under ‘Intellectual and Practical Skills,’ with particular emphasis on ‘critical’ and ‘creative’ thinking.

Outcome (d) falls under ‘Personal and Social Responsibility,’ in particular ethical reasoning; since the students deal with complex hypothetical cases, and since the hypothetical cases are frequently closely modeled on actual ones, presumably our students develop their ability to apply such reasoning to complex actual cases as well.

4. For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:
   a) Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.

   The assessment takes the form of an essay review. Submitted essays are evaluated for performance in all four of the outcomes. Ethics submissions in particular provide data on Outcome (d).

   b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.

   The assessment consists of essays submitted at three different periods during a major’s career.
For the first, every student must submit a paper from a class taken within a semester of the student’s declaring the major.

The second is from a class in our core required courses: PHIL 112, PHIL 152, PHIL 180, PHIL 181; this review may be a sampling.

The third is an essay written for PHIL 189, the senior seminar.

For Outcome (d) the review samples those submissions in each classification which are papers on topics in ethics.

c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.

Sample Argumentative essay (4-5 pages)
Choose an entity (or category of entity) which is widely believed to exist, but which you think does not.
Give unified and coherent argument why it does not exist.

The paper should consider the following points:
a) Why do some people think it does? That is, what role does it play in their ontology? (No disparaging psychological diagnoses: give their reasons).
b) Why do you not accept it? Give your argument for its nonexistence.
c) On your account, what takes its place, or plays its role in your ontology?
(Alternatively, explain why nothing need play that role.)

Examples of suitable paper topics: Abstract entities, mathematical entities, theoretical entities in science, holes, immaterial minds, moral properties like ‘good’ and ‘right,’
human races, a Perfect Being.
Do not write on Santa Claus, UFOs, Bigfoot, or anything like that. They don't raise philosophical problems.

d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

Evaluation of the essay submissions have been made using the “Grading Standards for Philosophy Papers”. Under the revised procedures approved in 2011 evaluation are made using the new Program Value Rubric.

Sample rubric applying to the General Major: ‘Analysis and Philosophical Thinking’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Goal</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Threshold, or Not Adequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis, and Philosophical</td>
<td>Identifies creative, focused, manageable</td>
<td>Identifies a topic that, while manageable, is</td>
<td>Identifies a topic too general or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Thinking**

| topics allowing for indepth analysis and potential for synthesizing material; | too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic; |
| - formulates articulate, defensible theses; | - presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view; |
| - synthesizes detailed information from relevant sources representing various philosophical approaches; | - critical elements of methodology are missing; |
| - conclusion is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings. | - states a conclusion too general or beyond the scope of the premises |

| unmanageable; | presents information from irrelevant sources; |
| - presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view; | - misunderstands methodology; |
| - critical elements of methodology are missing; | - states ambiguous or unsupported conclusion |

*If the requested data and/or analysis are not yet available for any of the learning outcomes, please explain why and describe the plan by which these will occur. Please limit your response to 500 words or less.*

The data for previous essay reviews, conducted under the Grading Standards document are available and have been used to make revisions and improvements in the program. The new essay reviews will be conducted under the Program Value Rubric.

5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

**[Please limit your response to 200 words or less per item]**

a) Regarding Outcome (a): “understanding of major historical and contemporary philosophical developments, essays revealed satisfactory mastery of contemporary philosophical developments. However, student needed a better grounding in the history of philosophy. In the latest curriculum revisions, our older lower-division history cycle PHIL 25 (Ancient) and PHIL 27 (Early Modern), which were also in C-1 of GE were combined into PHIL 26, and two new upper-division courses (PHIL 127, PHIL 128) instituted as requirements for all majors.

b) Regarding Outcome (b): A regular item in the biannual faculty meeting on teaching methods, held during the work week before classes begin, has been how to design class paper topics that both test and improve students’ ability to state the precise issue they are treating and not stray from it in the course of their argument. Several faculty have started to include assignments requiring students to present an argument for a position they oppose. Some faculty now require
in any class essay a final section detailing the best objection to the argument of the essay, with an answer to the objection.

c) Regarding Outcome (d): the department has always insisted on the value of analytic argumentative papers. We would continue to refine our writing assignments even if our assessment findings showed exceptional performance in every one of our students, which it doesn’t.

d) To provide another opportunity for students to write papers on concrete ethical issues, the Center for Practical and Professional Ethics established an essay contest. Each year the spring essay is set on a particular concrete ethical issue. Winning papers are presented, with commentators at the annual spring ethics symposium.

6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

We have not sought data from alumni.

7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

There is no special accreditation for philosophy programs.

8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

Much of the Philosophy Department’s recent revision of its programs, including the “General Major,” was motivated and guided by the results of past assessments. Where students needed reinforcement in a given goal, assignments for doing so were incorporated in classes.

The new assessment procedures will give us more detailed information about how to revise course assignments so that the transition of a major through the three stages of assessment will be smooth and natural.