

# 2017 - 2018 Annual Program Assessment Report

The Office of Academic Program Assessment  
California State University, Sacramento

For more information visit our [website](#)  
or [contact us](#) for more help.

**Please begin by selecting your program name in the drop down.**

If the program name is not listed, please enter it below:

**BA Philosophy**

**OR enter program name:**

## Section 1: Report All of the Program Learning Outcomes Assessed

### Question 1: Program Learning Outcomes

#### Q1.1.

Which of the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Sac State Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BLGs), and emboldened Graduate Learning Goals (GLGs) **did you assess?** [Check all that apply]

- 1. **Critical Thinking**
- 2. **Information Literacy**
- 3. **Written Communication**
- 4. **Oral Communication**
- 5. Quantitative Literacy
- 6. **Inquiry and Analysis**
- 7. Creative Thinking
- 8. Reading
- 9. Team Work
- 10. Problem Solving
- 11. Civic Knowledge and Engagement
- 12. **Intercultural Knowledge, Competency, and Perspectives**
- 13. Ethical Reasoning
- 14. Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning
- 15. **Global Learning and Perspectives**
- 16. Integrative and Applied Learning
- 17. Overall Competencies for GE Knowledge
- 18. **Overall Disciplinary Knowledge**
- 19. **Professionalism**
- 20A. Other, specify any assessed PLOs not included above:

- a. Core competencies according to the Department's Program Values Rubric for Philosophy
- b.
- c.

20B. **Check here if your program has not collected any data for any PLOs.** Please go directly to Q6 (skip Q1.2 to Q5.3.1.)

**Q1.2.**

Please provide more detailed background information about **EACH PLO** you checked above and other information including how your specific PLOs are **explicitly** linked to the Sac State **BLGs/GLGs**:

*Please review the attached Program Value Rubric for Philosophy, which includes as among the core disciplinary skills in Philosophy (1) Inquiry and Analysis, (2) Critical and Creative thinking, and (3) Discipline Specific Knowledge, including Philosophical Methodology. Each of these is modified from the AACU individual rubric for each.*

*Each of these is explicitly linked to the Sacramento State Baccalaureate Learning Goals for the 21<sup>st</sup>Century: "Inquiry and Practical Skills...including inquiry and analysis, critical, philosophical and creative thinking..."*

*(<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Docs/BaccalaureateLearningGoalsforthe21stCentury.pdf>)*

**Q1.2.1.**

Do you have rubrics for your PLOs?

- 1. Yes, for all PLOs
- 2. Yes, but for some PLOs
- 3. No rubrics for PLOs
- 4. N/A
- 5. Other, specify:

**Q1.3.**

Are your PLOs closely aligned with the mission of the university?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q1.4.**

Is your program externally accredited (other than through WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC))?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (skip to **Q1.5**)
- 3. Don't know (skip to **Q1.5**)

**Q1.4.1.**

**If** the answer to Q1.4 is **yes**, are your PLOs closely aligned with the mission/goals/outcomes of the accreditation agency?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q1.5.**

Did your program use the **Degree Qualification Profile** ("DQP", see <http://degreeprofile.org>) to develop your PLO(s)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No, but I know what the DQP is
- 3. No, I don't know what the DQP is
- 4. Don't know

**Q1.6.**

Did you use action verbs to make each PLO measurable?

1. Yes  
 2. No  
 3. Don't know

(Remember: **Save your progress**)

## Section 2: Report One Learning Outcome in Detail

### Question 2: Standard of Performance for the Selected PLO

**Q2.1.**

Select **OR** type in **ONE(1)** PLO here as an example to illustrate how you conducted assessment (be sure you checked the **correct box** for this PLO in Q1.1):

**Inquiry and Analysis**

If your PLO is **not listed**, please enter it here:

**Q2.1.1.**

Please provide more background information about the **specific PLO** you've chosen in Q2.1.

*This PLO continues to be essential to each of our department's three major concentrations (general major, logic & philosophy of science, ethics politics & law). We continue to use Proficient, Competent, and Novice using the standards below (see Q2.3).*

**Q2.2.**

Has the program developed or adopted **explicit program standards of performance/expectations** for this PLO? (e.g. "We expect 70% of our students to achieve at least a score of 3 or higher in all dimensions of the Written Communication VALUE rubric.")

1. Yes  
 2. No  
 3. Don't know  
 4. N/A

**Q2.3.**

Please **1) provide and/or attach the rubric(s) AND 2) the standards of performance/expectations** that you have developed for *the selected PLO* here:

Please see the attached rubric with the following comments for Inquiry, Analysis & Synthesis:

**PROFICIENT:**

*Identifies creative, focused, manageable topics which allows for in-depth analysis and potential for synthesizing material;*

- *formulates articulate, defensible theses; synthesizes detailed information from relevant sources representing various philosophical approaches;*
- *skillfully develops all elements of a methodology or theoretical framework;*
- *synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to a thesis;*
- *conclusion is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings; insightfully discusses relevant, supported limitations and implications.*

**COMPETENT:**

- *Identifies a topic that while manageable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic which impedes the full extent potential for analysis and synthesis;*
- *presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches;*
- *critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused;*
- *organizes evidence, but organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities;*
- *states a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings;*
- *presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.*

**NOVICE:**

*Identifies a topic that is far too general, wide-ranging, unmanageable, or impractical;*

- *presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view or approaches;*
- *inquiry and analysis demonstrate misunderstanding of methodology, theoretical framework;*
- *includes unorganized or irrelevant evidence;*
- *states ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings;*
- *presents limitations and implications, which are irrelevant or unsupported.*

 appendix A (2018), philosophy program value rubric.pdf  
136.49 KB

 No file attached

<b>Q2.4. PLO</b>	<b>Q2.5. Stdrd</b>	<b>Q2.6. Rubric</b>	Please indicate where you have published the <b>PLO</b> , the <b>standard (stdrd)</b> of performance, and the <b>rubric</b> that was used to measure the PLO:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. In <b>SOME</b> course syllabi/assignments in the program that address the PLO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. In <b>ALL</b> course syllabi/assignments in the program that address the PLO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. In the student handbook/advising handbook
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. In the university catalogue
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. On the academic unit website or in newsletters
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6. In the assessment or program review reports, plans, resources, or activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. In new course proposal forms in the department/college/university

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8. In the department/college/university's strategic plans and other planning documents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9. In the department/college/university's budget plans and other resource allocation documents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Other, specify: <input type="text"/>

### Question 3: Data Collection Methods and Evaluation of Data Quality for the Selected PLO

**Q3.1.**

Was assessment data/evidence **collected** for the selected PLO?

1. Yes  
 2. No (skip to **Q6**)  
 3. Don't know (skip to **Q6**)  
 4. N/A (skip to **Q6**)

**Q3.1.1.**

How many assessment tools/methods/measures **in total** did you use to assess this PLO?

**Q3.2.**

Was the data **scored/evaluated** for this PLO?

1. Yes  
 2. No (skip to **Q6**)  
 3. Don't know (skip to **Q6**)  
 4. N/A (skip to **Q6**)

**Q3.2.1.**

Please describe how you collected the assessment data for the selected PLO. For example, in what course(s) or by what means were data collected:

*Philosophy 189 is a 1-unit senior seminar taken during the last semester before graduation. Part of this seminar requires taking two assessment tools: (1) a written and revised philosophical analysis, (2) a timed philosophical analysis taken as an exit exam. We collected and scored 29 of each of these (8 from Fall 2017, 21 from Spring 2018) on the three PLOs.*

**(Remember: Save your progress)**

### Question 3A: Direct Measures (key assignments, projects, portfolios, etc.)

**Q3.3.**

Were direct measures (key assignments, projects, portfolios, course work, student tests, etc.) used to assess this PLO?

1. Yes  
 2. No (skip to **Q3.7**)  
 3. Don't know (skip to **Q3.7**)

**Q3.3.1.**

Which of the following direct measures (key assignments, projects, portfolios, course work, student tests, etc.) were used? [**Check all that apply**]

- 1. Capstone project (e.g. theses, senior theses), courses, or experiences
- 2. Key assignments from required classes in the program
- 3. Key assignments from elective classes
- 4. Classroom based performance assessment such as simulations, comprehensive exams, or critiques
- 5. External performance assessments such as internships or other community-based projects
- 6. E-Portfolios
- 7. Other Portfolios
- 8. Other, specify:

**Q3.3.2.**

Please **1) provide and/or attach the direct measure** (key assignments, projects, portfolios, course work, student tests, etc.) you used to collect data, **THEN 2) explain here** how it assesses the PLO:

*We used two direct measures, both implemented in PHIL 189: Senior Seminar, a capstone course taken in the final semester.*

- 1. Philosophical Analysis (see Appendix B) serves as a core assignment in several PHIL major courses, including all of the upper division core courses in the major. In PHIL 189 it is administered as a timed exam. Students have two hours to read and review a published paper they have not previously seen, analyze it to provide a summary of the central argument and develop a critique of that argument. This tests students' ability to professional papers, write effectively, analyze and reconstruct a logical argument, then criticize the argument. As a timed exam, the intent is also to assess the degree to which students have mastered these skills.*
- 2. Senior Essay is submitted during the semester students take PHIL 189. As a participant in PHIL 189, this essay is a required submission. The senior essay is either an originally written essay or a substantially revised previously submitted essay. Students work with one of the FT faculty to revise the essay. These are typically sustained arguments, on a topic of student interest, with considerable explication, though they need not present original developments.*



**appendix B (2018), philosophical analysis instructions.pdf**  
169.84 KB



No file attached

**Q3.4.**

What tool was used to evaluate the data?

- 1. **No** rubric is used to interpret the evidence (skip to **Q3.4.4.**)
- 2. Used rubric developed/modified by the faculty who teaches the class (skip to **Q3.4.2.**)
- 3. Used rubric developed/modified by a group of faculty (skip to **Q3.4.2.**)
- 4. Used rubric pilot-tested and refined by a group of faculty (skip to **Q3.4.2.**)
- 5. The VALUE rubric(s) (skip to **Q3.4.2.**)
- 6. Modified VALUE rubric(s) (skip to **Q3.4.2.**)
- 7. Used other means (Answer **Q3.4.1.**)

**Q3.4.1.**

**If** you used other means, which of the following measures was used? [**Check all that apply**]

- 1. National disciplinary exams or state/professional licensure exams (skip to **Q3.4.4.**)
- 2. General knowledge and skills measures (e.g. CLA, ETS PP, etc.) (skip to **Q3.4.4.**)
- 3. Other standardized knowledge and skill exams (e.g. ETC, GRE, etc.) (skip to **Q3.4.4.**)
- 4. Other, specify:

(skip to **Q3.4.4.**)

**Q3.4.2.**

Was the **rubric** aligned directly and explicitly **with the PLO**?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know
- 4. N/A

**Q3.4.3.**

Was the **direct measure** (e.g. assignment, thesis, etc.) aligned directly and explicitly **with the rubric**?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know
- 4. N/A

**Q3.4.4.**

Was the **direct measure** (e.g. assignment, thesis, etc.) aligned directly and explicitly **with the PLO**?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know
- 4. N/A

**Q3.5.**

Please enter the number (#) of faculty members who participated in planning the assessment data **collection** of the selected PLO?

**Q3.5.1.**

Please enter the number (#) of faculty members who participated in the **evaluation** of the assessment data for the selected PLO?

**Q3.5.2.**

**If** the data was evaluated by multiple scorers, was there a norming process (a procedure to make sure everyone was scoring similarly)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know
- 4. N/A

**Q3.6.**

How did you **select** the sample of student work (papers, projects, portfolios, etc.)?

We read the philosophical analyses, both timed and un-timed, of each of the 29 students from PHIL 189 in Fall 2017-Spring 2018. These graduating seniors of our program come from all three concentrations, and are as representative as we could possibly ask for.

**Q3.6.1.**

How did you **decide** how many samples of student work to review?

The department chair and the chair of the assessment committee each decided to review all of them, individually, after deciding with each other that this would be our process.

**Q3.6.2.**

Please enter the number (#) of students that were in the class or program?

**Q3.6.3.**

Please enter the number (#) of samples of student work that you evaluated?

**Q3.6.4.**

Was the sample size of student work for the direct measure adequate?

1. Yes  
 2. No  
 3. Don't know

**(Remember: Save your progress)**

### Question 3B: Indirect Measures (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.)

**Q3.7.**

Were indirect measures used to assess the PLO?

1. Yes  
 2. No (skip to **Q3.8**)  
 3. Don't Know (skip to **Q3.8**)

**Q3.7.1.**

Which of the following indirect measures were used? [**Check all that apply**]

1. National student surveys (e.g. NSSE)  
 2. University conducted student surveys (e.g. OIR)  
 3. College/department/program student surveys or focus groups

- 4. Alumni surveys, focus groups, or interviews
- 5. Employer surveys, focus groups, or interviews
- 6. Advisory board surveys, focus groups, or interviews
- 7. Other, specify:

**Q3.7.1.1.**

Please explain and attach the indirect measure you used to collect data:

*We survey our graduating seniors in PHIL 189, on a variety of program-specific issues that they can speak to in their final semester with us. See Appendix D.*



**appendix D (2018), philosophy 189 exit survey academic year 2017-2018 responses.pdf**  
206.3 KB



**No file attached**

**Q3.7.2.**

If surveys were used, how was the sample size **decided**?

*We took as many students as volunteered, from the pool of PHIL 189 students in Fall 17-Spring 18.*

**Q3.7.3.**

If surveys were used, how did you **select** your sample:

*We took as many students as volunteered, from the pool of PHIL 189 students in Fall 17-Spring 18.*

**Q3.7.4.**

If surveys were used, please enter the response rate:

28 students out of 29 = 96.5%

**Question 3C: Other Measures**  
(external benchmarking, licensing exams, standardized tests, etc.)

**Q3.8.**

Were external benchmarking data, such as licensing exams or standardized tests, used to assess the PLO?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (skip to **Q3.8.2**)
- 3. Don't Know (skip to **Q3.8.2**)

**Q3.8.1.**

Which of the following measures was used? [**Check all that apply**]

- 1. National disciplinary exams or state/professional licensure exams
- 2. General knowledge and skills measures (e.g. CLA, ETS PP, etc.)
- 3. Other standardized knowledge and skill exams (e.g. ETC, GRE, etc.)
- 4. Other, specify:

---

**Q3.8.2.**

Were other measures used to assess the PLO?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (skip to **Q4.1**)
- 3. Don't know (skip to **Q4.1**)

**Q3.8.3.**

If other measures were used, please specify:

 No file attached

 No file attached

**(Remember: Save your progress)**

## Question 4: Data, Findings, and Conclusions

**Q4.1.**

Please provide tables and/or graphs to summarize the assessment data, findings, and conclusions for the selected PLO in **Q2.1** (see Appendix 12 in our [Feedback Packet Example](#)):

*Please see appendix E for our detailed summary of the assessment data, our analysis of that data, and our recommendations going forward.*

*Appendix E displays our data, analysis, and recommendations for three PLOs:*

1. *Disciplinary Knowledge*
2. *Inquiry, Analysis, Synthesis*
3. *Critical & Creative Thinking*

*We examined each of these for our two assessments (philosophical analysis, both timed and untimed), and were very interested to see how these PLOs could be measured using the VALUE rubric in terms of students performing at a Proficient, Competent, Novice, or Inadequate level.*

 No file attached

 No file attached

#### **Q4.2.**

Are students doing well and meeting the program standard? **If not**, how will the program work to improve student performance of the selected PLO?

*Students are doing well and **Partially** met the program standard for the selected "Inquiry and Analysis" PLO (which we call "Inquiry, Analysis, and Synthesis").*

**81%** of those who took the un-timed philosophical analysis scored Competent or higher on this PLO (the target was 80%).

**78%** of those who took the timed philosophical analysis scored Competent or higher on this PLO (the target was 80%).

**31%** of those who took the un-timed philosophical analysis scored Proficient on this PLO (the target was 60%).

**33%** of those who took the timed philosophical analysis scored Proficient on this PLO (the target was 60%).

*It seems that our program still has room to challenge our majors to move from a merely "Competent" performance in their Inquiry, Analysis, and Synthesis to a truly "Proficient" performance in this PLO.*

*This will be done by using the VALUE rubric when explaining to students what we are looking for in their philosophical analyses, both in 189 (for the timed, and the untimed, assessments) and in the other courses where the philosophical analysis is used as an assessment tool.*

*For example, instructors can illustrate the difference between a student writing sample that is truly "Proficient" on this PLO, and a student writing sample that is merely "Competent" on this PLO.*

 appendix E (2018), philosophy average assessment numbers 17-18.pdf  
47.9 KB

 No file attached

**Q4.3.**

For the selected PLO, the student performance:

- 1. **Exceeded** expectation/standard
- 2. **Met** expectation/standard
- 3. **Partially** met expectation/standard
- 4. Did not meet expectation/standard
- 5. No expectation/standard has been specified
- 6. Don't know

### Question 4A: Alignment and Quality

**Q4.4.**

Did the data, including the direct measures, from all the different assessment tools/measures/methods directly align with the PLO?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q4.5.**

Were **all** the assessment tools/measures/methods that were used good measures of the PLO?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

### Question 5: Use of Assessment Data (Closing the Loop)

**Q5.1.**

As a result of the assessment effort and based on prior feedback from OAPA, do you anticipate **making any changes** for your program (e.g. course structure, course content, or modification of PLOs)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (skip to **Q5.2**)
- 3. Don't know (skip to **Q5.2**)

**Q5.1.1.**

Please describe **what changes** you plan to make in your program as a result of your assessment of this PLO.

As appendix E indicates, we plan to develop an initial Timed Philosophical Analysis as a before-snapshot of student skill levels in the main PLOs at entry into the program to help differentiate the value added by study in the discipline.

Then, we can utilize the very same Timed Philosophical Analysis (indexed to particular student) as an after-snapshot of student skill levels in the main PLOs at exit from the program. For example, student A has the before-snapshot and the after-snapshot with the same short passage from Aristotle; student B has the before-snapshot and the after-snapshot with the same short passage from Blackburn; and so on.

This way, we can put the before-snapshot and the after-snapshot side by side, and learn how the exact same student answered the exact same prompt, and (hopefully) see precisely where she has improved.

**Q5.1.2.**

Do you have a plan to assess the **impact of the changes** that you anticipate making?

1. Yes, describe your plan:

2. No

3. Don't know

**Q5.2.**

To what extent did you apply **previous assessment results** collected through your program in the following areas?

	1. Very Much	2. Quite a Bit	3. Some	4. Not at All	5. N/A
1. Improving specific courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Modifying curriculum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Improving advising and mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Revising learning outcomes/goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Revising rubrics and/or expectations	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Developing/updating assessment plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Annual assessment reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Program review	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Prospective student and family information	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Alumni communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. WSCUC accreditation (regional accreditation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
12. Program accreditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
13. External accountability reporting requirement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

14. Trustee/Governing Board deliberations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
15. Strategic planning	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Institutional benchmarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
17. Academic policy development or modifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Institutional improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
19. Resource allocation and budgeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
20. New faculty hiring	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Professional development for faculty and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Recruitment of new students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
23. Other, specify: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q5.2.1.**

Please provide a detailed example of how you used the assessment data above:

*First, we were able to hire a new faculty during the 2017-2018 AY (starting in the Fall of 2018), and much of our interview criteria focused specifically on evaluating candidates for their ability to contribute to improving the program in our core PLOs.*

*Second, as appendix E indicates (see Recommendation #4), our continuing discussions of how to improve our assessment structure yielded a Problem Detection Test in our senior seminar (PHIL 189). This Problem Detection Test complements the timed philosophical analysis, but instead of asking for a longer writing, the test uses a series of short answer questions that the students have never seen before, but which can be answered in a timed setting with a modest amount of reflection and writing. While we did not report on the results of this Problem Detection Test in the current (2017-2018) report, we are hopeful that it can evolve into a sharper tool for assessing our existing PLOs as well as others that we wish to assess in years to come.*

**Q5.3.**

To what extent did you apply **previous assessment feedback** from the Office of Academic Program Assessment in the following areas?

	1. Very Much	2. Quite a bit	3. Some	4. Not at All	5. N/A
1. Program Learning Outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Standards of Performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Measures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
4. Rubrics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
5. Alignment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
6. Data Collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
7. Data Analysis and Presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
8. Use of Assessment Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
9. Other, please specify: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

**Q5.3.1.**

Please share with us an example of how you applied **previous feedback** from the Office of Academic Program Assessment in any of the areas above:

(Remember: **Save your progress**)

### Section 3: Report Other Assessment Activities

#### Other Assessment Activities

**Q6.**

If your program/academic unit conducted assessment activities that are **not directly related to the PLOs** for this year (i.e. impacts of an advising center, etc.), please provide those activities and results here:

We did a self-study for program review, and we got an external report after the on-site visit for our program review.

 appendix F (Self Study 2017, revised 09 13 17).pdf  
113.33 KB

 appendix G (SacStatePhilosophy-ExternalReview-Cholbi-April2018).pdf  
415.94 KB

**Q6.1.**

Please explain how the assessment activities reported in **Q6** will be linked to any of your PLOs and/or PLO assessment in the future and to the mission, vision, and the strategic planning for the program and the university:

We are not sure yet, because we are still looking forward to getting the internal report for program review.

**Q7.**

What PLO(s) do you plan to assess next year? [**Check all that apply**]

- 1. **Critical Thinking**
- 2. **Information Literacy**

- 3. **Written Communication**
- 4. **Oral Communication**
- 5. Quantitative Literacy
- 6. **Inquiry and Analysis**
- 7. Creative Thinking
- 8. Reading
- 9. Team Work
- 10. Problem Solving
- 11. Civic Knowledge and Engagement
- 12. **Intercultural Knowledge, Competency, and Perspectives**
- 13. Ethical Reasoning
- 14. Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning
- 15. **Global Learning and Perspectives**
- 16. Integrative and Applied Learning
- 17. Overall Competencies for GE Knowledge
- 18. **Overall Disciplinary Knowledge**
- 19. **Professionalism**
- 20. Other, specify any PLOs not included above:

- a.
- b.
- c.

**Q8.**

Please explain how this year's assessment activities help you address recommendations from your department's last program review?

We have overhauled our assessment activities in the years since our last department program review. We are gratified that the external reviewer in this year's program review (see appendix G) thinks we responded successfully to the last program review's assessment recommendations.

**Q9.** Please attach any additional files here:

📎 appendix C (2018), philosophical analysis timed prompt from Adrian Brockless.pdf  
406.13 KB

📎 No file attached

📎 No file attached

**Q9.1.**

If you have attached **any** files to this form, please list **every** attached file here:

*a ppendix A (2018), philosophy program values rubric*

*appendix B (2018), philosophical analysis instructions*

*appendix C (2018), philosophical analysis timed prompt from Adrian Brockless*

*appendix D (2018), philosophy 189 exit survey academic year 2017-2018 responses*

*appendix E (2018), philosophy average assessment numbers 17-18*

*appendix F (2018), Self Study 2017, revised 09 13 17)*

*appendix G (2018), SacStatePhilosophy-ExternalReview-Cholbi-April2018*

## Section 4: Background Information about the Program

### Program Information (**Required**)

**Program:**

(If you typed in your program name at the beginning, please skip to **Q11**)

**Q10.**

Program/Concentration Name: [skip if program name is already selected or appears above]

BA Philosophy

**Q11.**

Report Author(s):

Russell DiSilvestro

**Q11.1.**

Department Chair/Program Director:

Russell DiSilvestro

**Q11.2.**

Assessment Coordinator:

Randy Mayes

**Q12.**

Department/Division/Program of Academic Unit (select):

Philosophy

**Q13.**

College:

College of Arts & Letters

**Q14.**

What is the total enrollment (#) for Academic Unit during assessment (see Departmental Fact Book):

110

**Q15.**

Program Type:

1. Undergraduate baccalaureate major

- 2. Credential
- 3. Master's Degree
- 4. Doctorate (Ph.D./Ed.D./Ed.S./D.P.T./etc.)
- 5. Other, specify:

**Q16.** Number of **undergraduate degree programs** the academic unit has?

**Q16.1.** List all the names:

Philosophy BA, General Major

Philosophy BA, Ethics, Politics, and Law

Philosophy BA, Logic and Philosophy of Science

**Q16.2.** How many concentrations appear on the diploma for this undergraduate program?

**Q17.** Number of **master's degree programs** the academic unit has?

**Q17.1.** List all the names:

**Q17.2.** How many concentrations appear on the diploma for this master's program?

**Q18.** Number of **credential programs** the academic unit has?

**Q18.1.** List all the names:

**Q19.** Number of **doctorate degree programs** the academic unit has?

**Q19.1.** List all the names:

When was your <b>Assessment Plan</b> ...	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.

**Q20.** Developed?

**Q20.2. (Required)**

Please **obtain** and **attach** your latest **assessment plan**:

 **philosophy assessment plan.pdf**  
437.46 KB

**Q21.**

Has your program developed a **curriculum map**?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q21.1.**

Please **obtain** and **attach** your latest **curriculum map**:

 2018\_PHIL\_Ethics, Politics, & Law BA.docx  
138.5 KB

**Q22.**

Has your program indicated explicitly in the curriculum map where assessment **of student learning** occurs?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q23.**

Does your program have a capstone class?

- 1. Yes, specify:

PHIL 189

- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**Q23.1.**

Does your program have a capstone project(s)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

**(Remember: Save your progress)**

Save When Completed!

ver. 10.31.17



# Philosophy Program Value Rubric

This rubric is designed for use in establishing a framework for student learning outcomes in each of the four Philosophy Programs: General Major; Concentration in Ethics, Politics, and Law; Concentration in Logic and Philosophy of Science; and the Minor in Philosophy. These identify the core student learning outcomes as well as program specific outcomes.

This value rubric is used on the departmental and university level to facilitate program assessment. By identifying the qualitative features associated with three broad levels of mastery, from novice to proficient, it is used to monitor and measure the degree of student philosophical development as they progress through the program.

It is also used by individual instructors to guide student learning outcomes for each course taught in the Philosophy program, as well as for identifying the qualitative features in student work which will form and inform the basis for student grades on individual assignments and in the course overall.

PROGRAM	LEARNING GOALS	PROFICIENT	COMPETENT	NOVICE
<b>Philosophy Core (Major, Honors, Minor)</b>	<b><i>Discipline Specific Knowledge, Including Philosophical Methodology</i></b>	Demonstrates comprehension and understanding of the major historical and contemporary works, figures and trends in the discipline of philosophy, including mastery in reading and analyzing philosophical texts, and ease with communicating (written and oral) philosophically; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes precisely the issue in question when confronted with a complex hypothetical; distinguish that issue from other suggestive, or similar-appearing, issues;</li> <li>States a position (possibly a position not one's own)</li> </ul>	Ability to identify major philosophical traditions and approaches in historical and contemporary works, though confusion of their similarities and differences impedes comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use and application of philosophical concepts in general;</li> <li>the ability to identify philosophical issues and arguments in most contexts, though less so in complex or multilayered hypotheticals or situations;</li> <li>the ability to formulate a philosophical argument, with</li> </ul>	Ability to identify and comprehend major philosophical traditions and approaches in historical or contemporary works is limited; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frequent misuse or misapplication of philosophical concepts;</li> <li>tendency to read or analyze philosophical texts at a superficial level;</li> <li>frequent misrecognition of the issue in question or inability to distinguish it from other similar issues;</li> <li>when stating a position it is overly broad as to be unfocused or indefensible,</li> </ul>

		<p>plausibly, sympathetically, and effectively, including its assumptions, implications; state forceful objections to the position;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand and effectively apply the core concepts and methods of philosophy (logical, semantical, ethical), including their underlying assumptions, implications, limitations;</li> <li>• Compose an argument, stating a conclusion that is a logical derivation from the premises and the evidence;</li> <li>• Compose a criticism of an argument showing the intrinsic weaknesses of the argument, as well as any counterarguments.</li> </ul>	<p>assumptions, and implications, though suffering from logical problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to identify an objection to it;</li> <li>• ability to communicate philosophically, though with errors or omissions.</li> </ul>	<p>or is implausible given its assumptions and implications;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constructed arguments are incomplete or suffer from fallacious reasoning, poor selection of supporting evidence, or contain irrelevant premises;</li> <li>• objections and critiques are off-point or poorly formulated;</li> <li>• written and oral communication lacks clarity, precision, or generates misunderstanding in others.</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Inquiry, Analysis &amp; Synthesis</i></b>	<p>Identifies creative, focused, manageable topics which allows for in-depth analysis and potential for synthesizing material;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formulates articulate, defensible theses; synthesizes detailed information from relevant sources representing various philosophical approaches;</li> <li>• skillfully develops all elements of a</li> </ul>	<p>Identifies a topic that while manageable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic which impedes the full extent potential for analysis and synthesis;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches;</li> <li>• critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing,</li> </ul>	<p>Identifies a topic that is far too general, wide-ranging, unmanageable, or impractical;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view or approaches;</li> <li>• inquiry and analysis demonstrate misunderstanding of methodology, theoretical framework;</li> <li>• includes unorganized or</li> </ul>

		<p>methodology or theoretical framework;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to a thesis;</li> <li>• conclusion is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings; insightfully discusses relevant, supported limitations and implications.</li> </ul>	<p>incorrectly developed, or unfocused;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organizes evidence, but organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities;</li> <li>• states a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings;</li> <li>• presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.</li> </ul>	<p>irrelevant evidence;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• states ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings;</li> <li>• presents limitations and implications, which are irrelevant or unsupported.</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Critical and Creative Thinking</i></b>	<p>Recognizes and reflects on the value of creativity to philosophical method;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluates the creative philosophical process using domain-appropriate criteria;</li> <li>• actively seeks out and follows through on untested and potentially risky directions or approaches to the assignment;</li> <li>• not only develops a logical, consistent plan to solve problem, but recognizes implications of each plausible solution and can articulate reasons for choosing one over</li> </ul>	<p>Successfully adapts an appropriate exemplar to assigned specifications;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considers new directions or approaches without going beyond the guidelines of the assignment;</li> <li>• considers and rejects less acceptable approaches to solving problem;</li> <li>• includes (recognizes the value of) alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas in a narrow way;</li> <li>• experiments with creating a novel or unique idea, question, format;</li> <li>• connects ideas or solutions in novel ways.</li> </ul>	<p>Successfully reproduces an appropriate philosophical hypothetical or exemplar of an argument or analysis;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stays strictly within the guidelines of the assignment;</li> <li>• only a single approach is considered and is used to address the philosophical issue or problem;</li> <li>• acknowledges alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas; reformulates a collection of available ideas;</li> <li>• reformulates a collection of available ideas.</li> </ul>

		<p>another;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fully integrates alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas;</li> <li>• extends a novel or unique idea, question, format, or hypothetical to create new knowledge or knowledge that crosses boundaries;</li> <li>• transforms ideas or solutions into entirely new forms.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Logic &amp; Philosophy of Science (in addition to Core)</b></p>	<p><b><i>Program Specific Knowledge</i></b></p>	<p>Demonstrates sophistication of comprehension of central issues in the philosophy of science as well as those arising within the study of language, mind, and space and time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shows detailed grasp of the design and significance of scientific studies and experiments;</li> <li>• demonstrates proficiency with proofs in first order propositional and predicate logic and main non-classical logics;</li> <li>• able to prove significant properties of formal systems and their extensions;</li> <li>• demonstrates reliable and</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates good comprehension of central issues in the philosophy of science and those arising within the study of language, mind, and space and time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shows basic grasp of the design and significance of scientific studies and experiments;</li> <li>• demonstrates ability to do simple to medium difficulty proofs in first order propositional and predicate logic and some non-classical logics, but may struggle with complex problems;</li> <li>• shows basic grasp of the properties of formal systems and their extensions, and some facility with proofs;</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates preliminary and general comprehension of basic issues in the philosophy of science and those arising within the study of language, mind, and space and time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shows acceptable grasp of the design and significance of scientific studies and experiments;</li> <li>• ability to do proofs may be limited to simple problems in first order propositional and predicate logic and some non-classical logics;</li> <li>• shows an awareness of the basic properties of formal systems and their extensions, but may struggle to perform or understand proofs;</li> </ul>

		<p>thorough understanding of the core concepts of probability and decision under uncertainty and is able to frame and solve problems of varying complexity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates basic understanding of the core concepts of probability and decision under uncertainty and is able to frame and solve simple to medium difficulty problems in each but may struggle with complex problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates basic understanding of the core concepts of probability and decision under uncertainty but may be unable to frame and solve problems above an introductory level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ethics, Politics &amp; Law (in addition to Core)</b></p>	<p><b><i>Program Specific Knowledge Including Ethical Reasoning, Problem Solving, Action</i></b></p>	<p>Demonstrated comprehension of major ethical and meta-ethics theories and traditions in historical and contemporary works;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fluency in comprehension and application of ethical terms and concepts;</li> <li>capable of formulating subtle and detailed defenses of ethical positions (even those not one's own);</li> <li>cogent and insightful analysis of ethical issues (historical and contemporary);</li> <li>demonstrated comprehension of complex ethical and meta-ethical issues, arguments, and counter-arguments;</li> <li>sophisticated and insightful application of ethical reasoning to</li> </ul>	<p>Student can name the major ethical and meta-ethical theories but is only able to present the gist of the named theory, lacking sophistication and detail;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but incompletely grasps the complexities, interrelationships among the issues;</li> <li>student can apply ethical perspectives and concepts to an ethical question, independently though the application is inaccurate;</li> <li>student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives and concepts but does not respond to them, ultimately objections, assumptions, and implications do not affect the</li> </ul>	<p>Student only names the major ethical and meta-ethical theories, but confuses the differences between them;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships;</li> <li>student can apply ethical perspectives and concepts to an ethical question but only with support (using examples, in a class, in a group, or a fixed-choice setting);</li> <li>student states a position but cannot state relevant objections, assumptions or limitations of the different perspectives and concepts.</li> </ul>

		problems in public policy, law, politics, and morality.	judgment or determination of the issue.	
--	--	--	--	--

Bellon, Essay Analysis Assignment, CSUS, 2012 || Modified from *How to Analyze a Philosophical Essay*, G. Randolph Mayes. Available at <https://sites.google.com/site/grandolphmayes/how-to-write-a-philosophical-analysis>.

# Analyzing a Philosophical Essay

---

Here is how to write an analysis of a philosophical essay for this class. First, read the assigned article several times. When you think you understand it, select an aspect of the article that you find particularly interesting, troubling, exciting, confusing, or problematic. By an aspect of the article, does not mean a particular section of it; it means a claim or set of claims to which the author is committed, either by explicitly arguing for them, or implicitly presupposing them.

## Writing Style

Your analysis should be concise and thorough. Absolutely do not engage in:

- Unnecessary editorializing
- Pointless repetition
- Personal attacks on the author or questioning of the author's psychological motives
- Complaining about the author's writing style or choice of words

In short, always strive to express yourself in the simplest, clearest, and most precise terms possible.

All direct quotations must, of course, be identified as such with a citation. However, in general, an essay of this type should make minimal use of direct quotations. As a rule, one should only quote an author if the precise way in which he or she has chosen to express something figures essentially into your analysis. Never simply substitute a quotation for your own summary of what the author is saying.

## Format

Your analysis must contain the following three sections, in this order:

- Introduction
- Summary
- Critique

Be sure to identify each section. In other words, at the top of the introduction write the word "Introduction," etc.

A Conclusion section may be added, but this is optional. The critical part of your analysis should demonstrate an awareness of other relevant readings assigned in the course. You should be careful when you are reproducing criticisms that are made by other authors we have read. Be sure to attribute those criticisms to their sources and to reference them with proper citations. You should be careful to include or consider important criticisms made by other authors when they are clearly relevant to your own concerns.

**Follow these specific instructions for each section, to the letter.**

Bellon, Essay Analysis Assignment, CSUS, 2012 || Modified from *How to Analyze a Philosophical Essay*, G. Randolph Mayes. Available at <https://sites.google.com/site/grandolphmayes/how-to-write-a-philosophical-analysis>.

## Introduction

This section must accomplish the following tasks in the following order, preferably by devoting a single short paragraph to each task.

1. Identify the article, and describe in one or two sentences what problem(s) it addresses and what view(s) it defends.
2. State precisely which aspect(s) of the article your analysis will address and precisely what you intend to accomplish. This must not be a vague statement like "I will evaluate the author's views..." or "I will show where I agree and where I disagree....". Rather, it must be a very specific and concise statement of the case you intend to make, and the basic considerations you intend to employ in making it. (You will probably find it impossible to write this section before your analysis has gone through the rough draft phase.)

## Summary

The rules for constructing a summary are as follows:

1. For the most part, you should summarize only those aspects of the article that are relevant to your critique. If you summarize more than that, it should only be because anything less will not provide the reader an adequate understanding of the author's basic concerns. Do not produce an unnecessarily lengthy or detailed summary. As a general rule of thumb, the summary and critique will usually be roughly equal in length.
2. The summary must present the author's views in the best possible light. It must be a thorough, fair, and completely accurate representation of the author's views. Misrepresentation of the author's views, especially selective misrepresentation (i.e., misrepresentation for the purpose of easy refutation) is EVIL and will be heavily penalized.
3. The summary must contain absolutely no critical comments. (This restriction does not prevent you from expressing some uncertainty about what the author is saying, however.)
4. The summary should be organized logically, not chronologically. Each paragraph in the summary will ordinarily present argument(s) the author makes in support of a particular position. This means that, depending on the organization of the article itself, a single paragraph from the summary may contain statements that are made in very different places in the article. The summary itself should be organized in a way that makes the author's views make sense. Under no conditions are you to simply relate what the author says the way that s/he says them. A summary that goes something like: "The author begins by discussing.....Then s/he goes on to say.....then, etc.," while not evil, is VERY BAD.

## Critique

1. Your critique should be organized in a way that reflects the structure of your summary. This is easy to do since you have selected for summary only those aspects of the article about which you have something to say. Be sure your critique obeys the rules laid out in the Writing Style section above.

Bellon, Essay Analysis Assignment, CSUS, 2012 || Modified from *How to Analyze a Philosophical Essay*, G. Randolph Mayes. Available at <https://sites.google.com/site/grandolphmayes/how-to-write-a-philosophical-analysis>.

Here are three ***different*** approaches to doing a critique (select only one method to write your analysis).

- a. Define your project in terms of arguments and views that ***you find problematic***. In your critique show how the author's conclusion does not follow, either because
  - (i) the author's reasons are false, or
  - (ii) the author's reasoning is mistaken, or
  - (iii) the author has failed to make other important considerations that tend to undermine the conclusion.
- b. Define your project in terms of arguments and views that ***you basically agree with***. In your critique, consider ways in which the author's views might reasonably be criticized. Then attempt to strengthen the author's position by showing how these criticisms can actually be met. If you use this technique, be sure you don't consider criticisms that the author actually does respond to in the context of the article (unless, of course, you think that the author has failed to answer the objections effectively).
- c. Define your project in terms of arguments and views that ***you find interesting, but which you are currently disinclined to either fully accept or fully reject***. Carefully articulate the strongest considerations in favor of the view and the strongest considerations against the views. Then carefully explain why you remain undecided and indicate precisely what sort of information or arguments would be required for you to be able to make up your mind.

### Conclusion (Optional)

1. If your analysis is sufficiently complicated, it may help the reader to briefly recapitulate the steps you have taken in reaching your conclusions. The conclusion should be very short and it should contain no new information or claims. This restriction prevents you from making closing comments which are not sufficiently articulated in the body of the paper.





**Program Assessment Report Learning Outcomes Data 2017-18**

**Number of Students Whose Submissions Were Reviewed = 29 (8 in Fall 2017, 21 in Spring 2018) .**  
**Expectation: 1. At least 80% will score at Competent or Higher in each PLO; 2. At least 60% will score at Proficient in each PLO.**

Instrument/Program Learning Outcome	% Proficient (A)	% Competent (B)	% Novice (C)	% Inadequate (DFWI)	%Competent or Higher
<b>Written/Revised Philosophical Analysis *</b>					
<b>Individual Program Learning Outcomes:</b>					
Disciplinary Knowledge	40%	45%	16%	0%	84%
Inquiry, Analysis, Synthesis	31%	50%	17%	2%	81%
Critical & Creative Thinking	29%	48%	22%	0%	78%
<b>Timed Philosophical Analysis as Exit Exam</b>					
<b>Individual Program Learning Outcomes:</b>					
Disciplinary Knowledge	29%	53%	12%	5%	83%
Inquiry, Analysis, Synthesis	33%	45%	17%	5%	78%
Critical & Creative Thinking	34%	40%	22%	3%	74%
<b>Course Grades</b>					
<b>PHIL 189</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>62%</b>

- Analysis**
1. Students effectively met (or nearly met) expectations for 80% Competent or Higher in each PLO.
  2. Students have good deal of room to improve before 60% Proficient in each PLO is reached.
  3. Understandably, student % Proficient was greatest in "Disciplinary Knowledge" for both written analysis and the timed analysis.
  4. Student performance continues to indicate department's strength in Disciplinary Knowledge, with improvements needed in other PLOs.

- Recommendations**
1. Develop initial Timed Philosophical Analysis as a before-snapshot of student skill levels in the main PLOs at entry into the program to help differentiate the value added by study in the discipline.
  2. Utilize identical Timed Philosophical Analysis (indexed to particular student) as an after-snapshot of student skill levels in the main PLOs at exit from the program.
  3. Continue to rely on 189 rather than other core courses for assessment purposes, to ensure consistency of data.
  4. Continue to experiment with new Problem Detection Test in PHIL 189 to complement the timed philosophical analysis with short answers reflecting each PLO.

**\* 2017-2018 is the fifth academic year** in which the vast majority of our graduating seniors were required to take the Senior Capstone PHIL 189, which was designed to serve as our primary program assessment opportunity. **But 2017-2018 is the sixth academic year** we have used the PA administered as a timed exam for assessment purposes..

Self Study  
Department of Philosophy  
Program Review  
September 13, 2017  
**Focused Inquiry**

## **1. Aim of the inquiry**

This focused inquiry is primarily an attempt to determine the Philosophy Department's true contribution to the University's graduation outcomes through a careful analysis of the transcripts of all graduating seniors from the past five years.

The value of this inquiry stems from the fact that many students who earn BA's in Philosophy are those who changed their majors after matriculating to CSUS. This phenomenon is not captured in the Philosophy Factbook published by our Office of Institutional Research, resulting in clearly incorrect graduation rates.

Beyond establishing a correct measure of the Department's contribution to number and type of students earning baccalaureate degrees at CSUS, this inquiry aims at identifying remediable impediments to earning a degree in Philosophy in a timely manner. We expect to use this information to (a) further delineate our existing Program Learning Goals and Outcomes; (b) refine our 2 and 4-year comprehensive Program Roadmaps and (c); increase the effectiveness of student advising.

As an inquiry of this kind often yields insights unrelated to the goals of the inquiry, we have pursued these here as well.

## **2. Details and terms of the inquiry**

We examined the transcripts of all 144 graduates of our program from Fall 2012 to Spring 2017 with respect to the following categories:

1. Concentration
2. Gender
3. Origin
4. Previous major
5. Years to degree
6. Minor
7. Additional major
8. Change of major data
9. Load
10. Path
11. GPA

The significance and interpretation of these categories follow:

## **2.1 Concentrations**

The department has three main concentrations: (1) General Major, (2) Ethics, Politics and Law, (3) Logic and Philosophy of Science. Students meeting specific academic criteria may also combine one or more of these concentrations with an Honors concentration. Although the department believes that the selection of a concentration should be almost entirely based on a student's interests, it is important for us to be able to provide accurate information concerning the average time to completion for each of them. We are also interested in developing a clear grasp of the value of each of these concentrations, in terms of both the number and type of student served.

## **2.2 Gender**

The Department has always taken a great deal of satisfaction in the belief that we graduate roughly equal numbers of male and female students. (In general, philosophy is still a male-dominated discipline.) It is important for us to know whether this is really true and to try to develop some appreciation of gender-relevant aspects of the program for future curriculum development. We also would like to know to what extent gender correlates with concentration and YTD.

Note: This inquiry treats gender as a binary measure (M/F) and so must be regarded as approximate.

## **2.3 Origin**

This refers to whether students are natives (began their careers at CSUS) or transferred from a previous school. Although many students who transfer from community colleges do so having accumulated the maximum of 70 units that may be applied to a degree at CSUS, a significant portion do not, and this is especially apt to skew our understanding of graduation rates for transfers. Hence, we have flagged students who transfer with less than 30 units as roughly equivalent to natives for this purpose.

## **2.4 Previous Major**

This category identifies students who have changed their major to Philosophy after matriculating to CSUS. As noted above, these are the students to which the OIR Factbook data are largely insensitive. Note that the fact that students had a previous major does not mean that they abandoned that major in switching to Philosophy. A significant number of our students are double majors.

## 2.5 Minor

As Philosophy is a relatively low unit major, we advise students to consider focusing their electives in such a way as to minor in a relevant discipline. We are interested in the number of students who do this.

## 2.6 Years to degree

This category encompasses four types of student:

### 1. Native Philosophy Major

Definition: Student began undergraduate education at CSUS as a Philosophy major. YTD measured from matriculation date.

### 2. Native Change of Major

Definition: Student began undergraduate education at CSUS in a different major. YTD measured from date of change of major.

### 3. Transfer Philosophy Major

Definition: Student transferred to CSUS as a Philosophy major. YTD measured from date of matriculation.

### 4. Transfer Change of Major

Definition: Student transferred to CSUS in a different major. YTD measured from date of change of major.

As very few freshmen begin their careers as Philosophy majors, the majority of students belong to categories 2-4. For these categories, the measurement dates were chosen to establish a basis for meaningful comparison.

**Important:** In this report “years to degree” is not to be confused with the University’s use of the term “graduation rate.”

## 2.7 Additional Major

As a relatively low unit major, Philosophy is a degree that invites double majoring as well. Because of reasonable concerns about the impact of this choice on the time to graduation, we do not specifically encourage students to double major. However, it will be very useful to know whether and to what extent the choice to pursue a double major extends the time to graduation.

## 2.8 Change of major data

This category applies to students who declared for Philosophy after matriculating to CSUS. The main quantities of interest here are:

- a. Semesters completed;
- b. Units completed;
- c. Philosophy classes (that count toward the major) completed.

These sub-categories refer only to courses taken at CSUS. One of the problematic aspects of tracking the effects of change of major on graduation is that students sometimes do not formally change their major until long after they have clearly decided to do so. To avoid exaggerating the Department's contribution to timely graduation, we stipulate here that students who go on to major in philosophy change their major no later than the semester in which they take one of the following courses: PHIL 152, PHIL 180, PHIL 181. This is because, while non-majors are not formally prevented from taking these courses, the structure of the program insures that they are almost entirely populated by students whose aim is to major in philosophy.

## 2.9 Load

It is important to assess the impact of student load on progress to the degree. Since student load can vary from semester to semester, and because students vary a great deal with respect to the number of summer and intercession courses they take, we have produced a relatively crude measure of this quantity. Where student preferences are stable, we have identified a typical unit load, considering Fall and Spring semesters only (12, 15, or 18). Where preferences are unstable we have identified a rough average, again taking only Fall and Spring semesters into account, and ignoring semesters in which students withdrew.

## 2.10 Path

The department has developed 2 and 4-year roadmaps to be used for advisement and planning. We have done this too recently to assess their impact, but we are interested here in learning how many students make suboptimal class choices and to what extent a student's path through the curriculum correlates

with the time it takes to graduate. To this end, every student's path to graduation has been assessed in terms of its similarity to the relevant roadmap as follows:

- 3 = Optimal
- 2 = Minor deviation
- 1 = Significant deviation
- 0 = Extreme deviation

## 2.11 GPA

We have noted the students' cumulative CSUS GPA. Here we are mainly curious about the extent to which GPA correlates with choice of concentration, path to degree and years to degree.

## 3. Results of inquiry

Timespan: Spring 2012-Fall 2017

Total graduates: 144

### 3.1 Concentrations

Over this 5-year period the number and percentage of students graduating in each concentration together including years to degree subsequent to declaring for the Philosophy Major and average GPA are as follows.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>Avg GPA</b>
Philosophy (General)	60	42%	2.5	3.0
Ethics, Politics & Law	62	43%	2.7	3.1
Logic & Phil. of Science	23	16%	2.7	3.2
Honors	7	5%	2.4	3.8

Notes: These are not mutually exclusive categories; hence raw numbers sum to >144 and percentages to >100%. Relation of concentration to other categories provided below. For YTD, Native Philosophy majors are excluded.

### 3.2 Gender

The table below represents the total and percentage of male and female graduates, the average YTD of each gender and the number and percentage of each gender participating in each concentration.

Gen	Total	Avg GPA	Avg YTD	General	EPL	LPS	Honors
F	50 = 35%	3.24	2.7	19 = 38%	25 = 50%	8 = 16%	2 = 4%
M	94 = 65%	3.06	2.6	41 = 44%	37 = 39%	15 = 16%	5 = 5%

Notes: Concentration columns represent total gender in each concentration what percent of total gender this represents. It does not represent the percent of each concentration that is male or female. Avg YTD excludes native Philosophy majors.

### 3.3 Origin

This table represents the number and percent of our graduates who began their undergraduate careers at CSUS and those who transferred from different institutions. For our purposes, we have represented students transferring with less than 30 units treated as *de facto* natives.

Origin	Total	Percent	5-year mean
Native	41	29%	8.2
Transfer	103	71%	20.6

### 3.4 Previous major

**Table A: Philosophy vs. Other**

Major	Total	Percent
Philosophy	80	56%
Other	64	44%

Notes: Indicates that 64 = 44% of Philosophy graduates matriculated to CSUS as either undeclared or declared under a different major over this 5 year period.

The most recent previous major of our change-of-major graduates is shown below. Programs preceded by an '\*'. We make no distinction between majors and pre-majors.

**Table B: Distribution of Other**

<b>Major</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Anthropology	3	2.1%
Athletic Training	2	1.4%
*Biology	3	2.1%
*Business	6	4.1%
Chemistry	3	2.1%
Child Development	1	.7%
Communication Studies	3	2.1%
Computer Engineering	1	.7%
Civil Engineering	2	1.4%
Computer Science	1	.7%
*Criminal Justice	2	1.4%
Economics	2	1.4%
Electrical Engineering	1	.7%
English	4	2.7%
Film	2	1.4%
Journalism	1	.7%
Kinesiology	2	1.4%
Math	3	2.1%
Music	2	1.4%
Photography	1	.7%
Physics	1	.7%
*Psychology	2	1.4%
Social Science	1	.7%
Sociology	1	.7%
Spanish	1	.7%
Undeclared	13	9%

Notes: No distinction made between pre-major and major. \* indicates impacted programs.

### 3.5 Minor

Minor	Total	Percent
Yes	20	14%
No	124	86%

### 3.6 Years to degree

This table provides the average years to degree measured from the point that a student declares for Philosophy.

**Table A: YTD**

Category	# Students	% Total	Avg YTD
Native Philosophy	11	7%	4.8
Native COM	25	17%	3.1
Transfer Philosophy	74	52%	2.4
Transfer COM	34	24%	2.6

Notes: The Department has had only 6 true Native Philosophy students in 5 years. The numbers above result from treating transfer students who declare for Philosophy with less than 30 units as well as Native COM who declare for Philosophy with less than 30 units as Native Philosophy.

Unfortunately, our analysis does not yield the Department's contribution to graduation rates as defined by the University, since we have only examined transcripts of students who have graduated. However, we can represent the graduation rates of our graduates. The relevant rates are 4, 5 and 6 years for Native Philosophy and 2, 3, and 4-year for the remaining categories.

The total number of Native Philosophy students is too low to be of much interest, but the rates for this category are:

**Table B: "Graduation rate" of Native Philosophy graduates.**

Category	4 year	5 year	6 year
Native Philosophy	2	10	11

The rates for the remaining categories are:

**Table C: “Graduation rate” of Nonnative Philosophy graduates.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2 year</b>	<b>3 year</b>	<b>4 year</b>
Native COM	7 = 28%	15 = 60%	20 = 80%
Transfer Philosophy	32 = 43%	69 = 93%	74 = 100
Transfer COM	16 = 47%	32 = 94%	33 = 97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55 = 41%</b>	<b>116 = 87%</b>	<b>127 = 95%</b>

Notes: These values are to be interpreted as meaning within the indicated number of years. Hence, the 6 year value is inclusive of the 4 and 5 years, etc.

### 3.7 Additional major

Many students are double majors for a substantial part of their academic careers but then graduate before completing both. As we are primarily interested in the effect of double-majoring on YTD, for this report we have counted a student as a double-major if they had two majors for at least two consecutive semesters.

<b>Additional Major</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	23	16%
No	121	84%

### 3.8 Change of major data

Students who changed their major to Philosophy after matriculating to CSUS fall into distinct categories, Native and Transfer, which are difficult to compare with respect to progress to degree since transfer students typically have completed most of their lower division course work prior to matriculation. Hence, we treat them separately below, with the provision noted above that for this purpose students who transfer to CSUS with less than 30 units from other institutions are categorized as Native.

<b>Averages</b>	<b>Native (31 students)</b>	<b>Transfer (32 students)</b>
Semesters completed prior to COM	4.6	2.3
Units completed prior to COM	58.3	28.1
Total degree-related PHIL courses completed prior to COM	2.2	2.1
Load	13.5	12.8
Years to degree	3	2.7

### 3.9 Load

Here we are interested in the average course load for distinct categories as well as the apparent impact of course load on graduation rate.

**Table A: Average load**

Category	Average load
All	13
Native Philosophy	13.2
Native COM	13.5
Transfer Philosophy	12.9
Transfer COM	12.8

Below we represent the association of course load and single vs. double major with YTD.

**Table B: Load in relation to YTD**

Load	# Students	% Total	Avg. YTD
<12	6	4%	2.8
12-13	85	59%	2.7
14-15	41	28%	2.5
16-18	6	4%	2.75
1 major	119	83%	2.6
2 majors	25	17%	3.0

Note: Years to degree (YTD) measured from time of matriculation for students who transfer in PHIL, time of COM for native and transfer. Native Philosophy students excluded.

### 3.10 Path

Path	# Students	%Total	YTD
2-3	75	52	2.6
1-0	69	48	2.8

Notes: All students included. 2 years subtracted from Native Philosophy majors for purposes of relevant comparison. Path Key: 3 = Optimal; 2 = Minor deviation; 1 = significant deviation; 0 = Extreme deviation.

### 3.11 GPA

Here we represent the correlation of average GPA with YTD.

<b>GPA</b>	<b># Students</b>	<b>% Total</b>	<b>Avg YTD</b>
Overall avg = 3.13	138	100%	2.65
3.5 – 4.0	38	27.5%	2.38
3.0 – 3.49	44	32%	2.7
2.5- 2.99	38	27.5%	2.85
< 2.5	18	13%	2.7

Notes: Excludes Native Philosophy majors.

## 4. Reflections on the data

### 4.1 Concentrations

These results confirm our current impression of the relative popularity of each concentration. The general Philosophy major and Ethics, Politics and Law (EPL) are about equally popular and together accommodate more than 80% of our majors. Logic and Philosophy of Science (LPS) is less popular accommodating only 16% of our majors. The Honors concentration is pursued by few students, as expected, though impressively fewer than meet the 3.5 GPA requirement.

A reasonable discussion point going forward is whether the demand for LPS warrants its continued existence, or existence in this form. In this context, it is worth noting that since all of the courses required for the LPS concentration have application to the general major and EPL, it does not require us to make unpopular course offerings. It is also worth noting that the average YTD for LPS and EPL are identical. (Both are slightly higher than the general major, which is expected given the greater number of units.)

Also of interest is the slightly higher average GPA of LPS students. Although not represented in the table above, the data show that LPS students are significantly overrepresented in the Honors concentration. Of the 7 students during this span, 4 are LPS and 3 are EPL. That the concentration serves as a magnet for able and ambitious students may be another reason for it to continue.

Still, because the Department's primary focus is ethics and values, we are actively discussing reconfiguration LPS more along the lines of a Science and Human Values concentration. The point here would be to further clarify our identity and boost participation in our science-based concentration while continuing to attract able students into Philosophy.

Because the Honors Concentration requires 9 units more than the other concentrations it is initially surprising to see that the YTD is significantly less. This may simply be due to small sample size, but it aligns with the results of 3.11, which show that students with a GPA  $\geq 3.5$  have the shortest YTD.

## 4.2 Gender

These data may be a significant cause for concern. In the U.S, Philosophy is well known to be a male-dominated major. Our persisting impression to date has been that the Department has been unusually successful in achieving something close to gender parity. This is an impression supported by the current Philosophy Fact Book as well.

However, the Fact Book provides data on enrolled majors, not graduates. If indeed we have something close to parity with respect to enrolled majors, but only 35% of our graduates are women, this implies that women are overrepresented in students who leave the program.

This is particularly concerning in light of the fact that (a) women who graduate from our program have a significantly higher GPA than men (3.2 vs. 3.0) and (b) that they graduate from our program at a nearly equal rate despite a tendency to choose a more rigorous path through the program (see below).

This suggests the need for us to do a better job at the level of faculty diversity, relevant course offerings and advisement.

Whereas the EPL concentration appears to be significantly more appealing to women than to men, the LPS concentration and the Honors concentration are at or near parity. The General Major, which provides the quickest and most flexible route through the program is significantly more popular with men than women.

## 4.3 Origin

These data primarily serve to correct the impression created by the current Philosophy Fact Book. According to Table 1 of the current Fact Book, the Department's 5-year mean for entering students (combined first-time freshmen and new transfers) is 30. However, this table, constructed through transcript analysis, of graduating students shows the 5-year mean to be 29 students. (This figure roughly agrees with Table 13 of the Fact Book). This would imply a roughly 100% graduation rate, which of course is not credible.

The disparity is fully explained by the number of students that change their major to Philosophy after matriculating to CSUS, the focus of the next section.

#### 4.4 Previous Major

Over this 5-year period  $64/144 = 44\%$  of our graduates changed their major to Philosophy after matriculation. The existence of these students is corroborated in the Fact Book's count of total degrees conferred, but they are nowhere specifically represented. So in this sense the Fact Book fails to capture the Department's real contribution to University's graduation goals.

The second table shows that students who changed their major to Philosophy came from 25 different programs, with significant numbers coming from 4 impacted programs.

#### 4.5 Minor

A fairly low number of Philosophy majors (14%) choose to minor, significantly fewer than choose to double major. This is interesting given that part of our rationale for remaining a relatively low-unit major is that it gives the students an opportunity to develop in depth knowledge of another discipline that relates to their philosophical interests. Of course, the value of pursuing a focused set of elective courses as opposed to a diverse one will vary with the student, but these numbers suggest that we might do a better job raising the possibility in advisement.

#### 4.6 Years to degree

Table A of section 3.6 shows that by far our largest category of majors is students who transfer from another institution as a Philosophy major. This table also shows that the average YTD for this group is the lowest: 2.4 years. The fact that Native COM students average 3.1 may be a cause for concern, but it is likely explained by the fact that they are able to change their major to Philosophy earlier in their undergraduate career. (Although the group of Native Philosophy majors is small, their average 4.8 YTD supports this interpretation.)

Table C, which provides the "graduation rate" of graduates (as defined in 3.6) shows that of Philosophy graduates who do not begin their careers as Philosophy majors at CSUS (transfers and Native COM, 41% graduate from the program within 2 years and 85% within 3.

Table C also shows, surprisingly, that Philosophy graduates who transferred to CSUS and changed their major to Philosophy subsequent to matriculation graduate most quickly. For this group, the 2-year rate is 47% and the 3-year rate is 94%

These data suggest that Philosophy has been useful in helping students who become dissatisfied with their initial choice of major late in their undergraduate careers to graduate in a timely manner.

Other variables that impact YTD are examined below.

#### **4.7 Additional major**

16% of Philosophy graduates choose to double major. For the same reason that we encourage students to minor in another discipline, we are inclined to find this gratifying. However, the data here should give us pause.

First, as we have here counted anyone as a double major who was registered as such for at least two semesters, we can see the success rate. Not represented in Table 3.7 is this: Of the 23 students who at one time intended to double major, only 8 succeeded.

We are also alive to the fact that the choice to double major can slow progress to graduation, and it is important for us to develop a sense of its impact. We pursue this in 4.9 below.

#### **4.8 Change of major data**

On average, native students who change their major to Philosophy do so after 4 or 5 semesters, whereas transfer students do so after about two semesters. Since transfer students typically have accrued about 2 years' worth of lower-division credit (and recall that we have accentuated this fact by treating those who came to CSUS with fewer than 30 units as natives), these data show that our transfer students tend to change their majors to Philosophy about 2 semesters later in their careers than natives. The near parity in time to degree after change of major suggests that natives who graduate in Philosophy do so more efficiently than transfer students. It also suggests that the causes of this disparity are anterior to declaration.

#### **4.9 Load**

The typical course load for the distinct categories of major specified in section 3.8 vary from 12.8 to 13.5, with the average typical course load overall being 13. This fact alone makes it clear that relatively few of our students plan to graduate from college in less than 5 years. More specifically, from the second table in 3.8 it may be inferred that  $91/144 = 63\%$  of our graduates averaged 13 units or less. This, of course, means that success in raising the 4-year (native) and 2-year (transfer)

graduation rates will require a substantial number of students to reformulate their personal goals.

Of particular interest, however, is that higher average course loads do not seem to significantly reduce the time to graduation. Philosophy students whose typical course load was 12-13 units per semester graduated within 2.7 years of declaring for Philosophy. Those who took 14-15 units graduated in 2.5.

It is possible that Philosophy students who take more courses per semester are in no particular hurry to graduate, and wish simply to learn as much as possible before they do. Evidence for this view exists in the last two lines of the second table, where we see that a significant factor in delayed graduation is the double major. Students who major in Philosophy alone typically graduate within 2.6 years of declaring for Philosophy. Students who double major typically graduate in 3 years.

Of course, it is not particularly surprising or alarming that double majors may take an extra semester to graduate. Recall, however, that 15 of the 23 students who attempted to double major failed to do so. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that overly optimistic attempts to double major constitute a significant impediment to timely graduation.

Of the 119 students whose only major was Philosophy and who declared for Philosophy with more than 30 units completed, 50 = 42% graduated in 2 years or less.

#### **4.10 Path**

Since the last review cycle the Department has made a serious effort to improve advising procedures, the most significant of which is the creation of 2 and 4 year graduation roadmaps. However, these maps have been in use for only the last two years and it is not possible to evaluate their effectiveness now.

What we can determine is how many students are taking courses in the correct order and how many are not. We should also be able to glean some evidence of the significance of path optimality for progress to degree.

The data here are concerning. The table shows that very nearly half of our majors take a path that was scored as significantly or extremely deviant. In real terms this means that almost half of our students are taking two or more advanced majors courses like 152, 180 or 181 very early in their careers, and taking courses meant to prepare them for these courses, such as 101, 127, 128 and their writing intensive course toward the end.

Although we believe we have made recent advising strides at this level, this information is sobering and gives us every reason to continue to emphasize the importance of advising with emphatic reference to the Roadmaps, and for teachers of advanced courses to strongly discourage students from taking courses out of sequence. It may also suggest the need to renew our discussion of stronger prerequisites.

The table shows only a small effect of path optimality on YTD. This, of course, does not imply that little harm is occurring, since this is a crude measurement. Students who do poorly in classes as a result of their lack of preparedness do not typically retake them. Meanwhile, it is obvious that when nearly half of a class consists of students who are unprepared for the material, the instructor naturally lowers their expectations, the quality of the educational experience for the other half is seriously diminished, and grade inflation may result.

#### **4.11 GPA**

We examined the significance of average GPA for choice of concentration as well as its relation to gender above. Table 3.11 also shows a strong and relatively unsurprising correlation between average GPA and YTD (high GPA correlates with faster graduation.) The fact that the correlation does not hold for students with an average GPA of less than 2.5 is interesting, but it contains the fewest number of students.

### **5. Summary of findings**

Philosophy helps CSUS students graduate, and indeed boosts the graduation rates of other majors, in ways that the OIR Fact Book does not currently reflect.

This focused self-study has given us several angles from which to adequately frame these facts, and has given us many additional realistic snapshots of the last five years of our philosophy majors who graduate, helping us identify areas for potential improvements, chief among which are the following:

1. Giving more attention to closing the remaining gender gap among majors.
2. Advising majors to stay closer to those parts of the “roadmaps” that place certain more demanding requirements (e.g. 152, 180, 181) after certain less demanding requirements (e.g. 60/61, 127, 128).
3. Advising (double) majors to consider minoring outside philosophy.

The department wishes to thank G. Randolph Mayes for his careful work in researching and writing this self-study.

EXTERNAL CONSULTANT REPORT

Department of Philosophy, Sacramento State University

April 2018

Dr. Michael Cholbi

Professor of Philosophy and Director, California Center for Ethics and Policy

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

## SOURCES CONSULTED

This report was prepared subsequent to consultation and discussion with:

- Department Chair Russell DiSilvestro
- Department tenure-accruing faculty, both junior and senior
- Department lecturers
- Members of the Departmental Program Review Committee
- Assistant Vice President Donald Taylor
- Undergraduate Dean Chevelle Newsome
- College Dean Sheree Meyer
- College Associate Dean Christina Bellon
- Director of Academic Program Assessment Amy Liu

## BACKGROUND

Since its previous program review, the Department has maintained a steady major enrollment of approximately 110 majors (University Fact Book, p. 2). “Conventional wisdom” in some philosophy circles hold that a healthy philosophy program enrolls 0.5% of the student population in a comprehensive university; the department’s current enrollment places it within that range. Aside from the gender ratio (to be addressed later), the Department’s enrolled majors are demographically similar to the university as a whole. The Department has seen a noticeable increase in diversity with respect to Asian students (an approximately 1/3 increase since 2012) and Hispanic/Latino students (an approximate 2/3 increase since 2012). Data concerning GPA (Fact Book, p. 14) suggest that the “achievement gap” for underrepresented groups is small. Students in the Applied Ethics and Law program are approximately one-half of the majors, with the others divided between the General philosophy program and the Logic and Philosophy of Science (LPS) Program. It is noteworthy that LPS, while small, has quadrupled in size since 2012.

The most significant change since the prior program review is in the composition of the Department’s faculty. The Department now has a healthier balance among professional ranks, thanks primarily to a number of hires made at the assistant professor level. More noteworthy, however, is the explosion in non-tenure-accruing lecturers, growing from seven in 2012 to 17 in 2016 (Fact Book, p. 11). They now constitute a majority of the Department’s faculty.

## PRIOR PROGRAM REVIEW (2010) AND DEPARTMENT RESPONSES

The Department’s previous program review was conducted in 2010. It contained 11 recommendations. The recommendations and the Department’s progress with respect to these recommendations are summarized below.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Department response and update</b>
1. The Department should institute a stronger mentoring system for junior faculty, particularly in the areas of RTP expectations and course evaluations.	This recommendation has been <i>addressed</i> . The 2010 recommendation was made in the wake of a tenure denial. Current junior faculty indicate that mentoring efforts are adequate,

	and there is very little opacity in RTP expectations or course evaluations.
2. To the extent possible, the Department should look for ways of meaningfully including lecturers in program and Department activities.	This recommendation has been <i>addressed</i> . The Department makes conscious efforts to include lecturers in its symposia, and lecturers indicate satisfaction with their inclusion in the Department's activities and culture and with the respect they are accorded by the Department.
3. The Philosophy Department should review advising practices, with the goal of bringing majors (and minors) into the advising process earlier in their academic program	This recommendation has been <i>partially addressed</i> . Faculty note that online advising has facilitated advising earlier in students' academic careers. Still, conversations with students and alumni suggest that more aggressive advising practices may be warranted (see recommendation [6] below).
4. The Philosophy Department should address the tension between major and service course goals (esp. in G.E.) for those course offerings that fulfill both functions.	This recommendation has been <i>addressed</i> , via the introduction of lower division history of philosophy courses.
5. The Philosophy Department should give serious consideration to developing upper-division counterparts to PHIL 25 and PHIL 27, that will be intended primarily for majors, to ensure that major preparation in these areas is of sufficient rigor.	This recommendation has been <i>addressed</i> , through the introduction of PHL 26 and PHL 28.
6. The Philosophy Department should seek to clarify and strengthen links between activities undertaken by the Center for Practical and Professional Ethics and its curriculum for the Philosophy major and minor. The Department should specifically seek out way by which the Center's activities may be used to enrich the major curriculum.	This recommendation has <i>partially addressed</i> through measures such as the introduction of a student essay contest and the use of students as panelists and moderators at Center events. These improvements notwithstanding, see recommendations [2] and [4] for further context.
7. The Philosophy Department should explore the possibility of establishing an internship program for undergraduate majors.	This recommendation has been <i>partially addressed</i> . Although the Department does not have a formal mechanism to assist students in finding internships, conversations with students and faculty indicate that informal efforts in this regard are fairly successful. Some reservations were expressed about a formal internship program, inasmuch it might convey the erroneous impression that the study of philosophy prepares students <i>only</i> for careers in those fields for which formal internship opportunities exist.

8. The Philosophy Department should not pursue the possibility of establishing a M.A. degree program in Philosophy at this time.	This recommendation has been <i>addressed</i> . Neither Department faculty nor administration exhibit interest in the Department's pursuing an M.A. program.
9. It is imperative that the Philosophy Department work with the university assessment coordinator to develop and implement a workable student learning outcomes assessment plan that satisfies both University and WASC requirements, which include: 1. Identification of a measurable set of student learning outcomes; 2. Methods (including direct measures) for assessing those outcomes; 3. Demonstrated mechanism[s] for using the assessment results in programmatic planning.	This recommendation has been <i>thoroughly addressed</i> . Since 2010, the Department has implemented an assessment regimen that measures student progress both on discipline-specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLO's) and university Baccalaureate Learning Outcomes (BLO's). The Department deploys a range of instruments, both direct and indirect, to measure this progress, and periodically reflects on how to revise its curriculum, pedagogy, etc., to enable students to meet both PLO's and BLO's. This culture of assessment has permeated into personnel decisions, as the Department reports taking into account job candidates' ability to advance PLO's and BLO's when making hiring decisions. In the area of assessment, the Department has gone from laggard to leader.
10. The Department should seek permission to hire a full-time faculty member in the area of applied ethics as soon as circumstances permit.	This recommendation has been <i>thoroughly addressed</i> . Since 2010, multiple faculty with interests in applied ethics have joined the Department.
11. The Department and the Dean of the College should work together to find a way by which support for the Center for Practical and Applied Ethics can be made available in the form of additional assigned time.	This recommendation is largely <i>unaddressed</i> . The desired support for assigned time has not materialized. (For comment, see recommendation [4] below.)

## COMMENDATIONS

- [1] The leadership of the Department, including but not limited to the Chair, is universally lauded for the integrity, conscientiousness, and thoroughness with which it oversees the Department.
- [2] The Department is widely regarded as an exemplary citizen among university departments, playing its part in advancing the university's mission and culture, as well as responding thoughtfully to feedback and to institutional initiatives. (As noted above, the Department was especially proactive and intentional in implementing recommendations made in connection with the previous program conducted in 2010.)
- [3] Thanks to [1] and [2], the Department enjoys a high level respect among other departments and university administrators ("a model department in many ways").
- [4] The Department has established a highly collaborative and informative-intensive approach to the assurance of teaching quality among its faculty.

- [5] The Department's emphasis on applied ethics, implemented in 2005, has given it needed outward-looking direction and purpose.
- [6] The Department has established a serious and vibrant scholarly atmosphere, with nearly all of its faculty actively pursuing programs of research.
- [7] The Department has diversified its population of student majors along several measures of ethnicity.
- [8] Relationships among the Department's tenure-accruing faculty, its lecturers, and its students are strong and supportive. The Department is "amazingly cohesive" and "high functioning." Students trust that the faculty will be responsive to their needs and concerns.
- [9] Through programs such as those facilitated by the Center for Practical and Professional Ethics, the Department makes a demonstrable contribution to the intellectual climate of the University.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

[1] *The Department should incorporate a methods-based, seminar style course into its curriculum to smooth students' transition from the lower-level General Education courses through which they are typically introduced to philosophy and the more demanding upper-level courses required of Department majors.*

Transitioning between the lower-division General Education courses through which students are introduced to philosophy and the upper-division courses aimed primarily at majors should involve some measure of challenge, insofar as majors are asked to develop and manifest higher levels of mastery. However, such a transition ought not frustrate or discourage students, and it is of course detrimental to the Department if any adversity associated with this transition leads students to change majors, leave the University, etc. There is also significant evidence that grades in a student's first major course is strongly predictive of subsequent academic success (see Dimeo, "Data Dive," for findings from Georgia State University: <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/07/19/georgia-state-improves-student-outcomes-data>)

In conversations with students, alumni, and some department faculty, it was occasionally suggested that this transition proves more daunting than it should be for some students — that many students "don't realize what they've gotten themselves into until they're past the 'point of no return'". The students and alumni reported that while they themselves found this increase in standards manageable, some Department majors do not, as a result, become academically disengaged.

To this end, I invite the Department to implement a course between its lower-division and upper-division curricula intended solely for students new to the major (whether transfers or Sac State natives). This 'methods' course or proseminar would emphasize the deliberate practice of skills essential to successful undergraduate study in philosophy: slow, careful, sympathetic reading of philosophical texts, reconstruction of arguments, the fashioning of relevant and forceful objections to philosophical positions or arguments — and, of course, the incorporation of these skills into written philosophical work. Such a course is also an opportunity to develop discipline-

specific information literacy (e.g., how to effectively use such resources as Google Scholar or PhilPapers), as well as an opportunity to practice oral communication and teamwork, two skills which both the most recent alumni survey and my interactions with students and alumni indicated merit more attention in the Department's teaching. Such a course might also mitigate the problem (discussed below under Focused Inquiry) of students taking courses in sequences that are not optimal for overall academic progress.

This transitional course would have the additional advantage of creating a cohort of student majors. It could also function to stimulate student thinking about post-baccalaureate study or careers. From an assessment point of view, the course could be a source of artifacts that could be used in tandem with student work from PHL189 as the basis for a longitudinal student assessment. Lastly, by integrating students into the major and its expectations more fully and completely, the course may serve to improve the chances of academic retention and success among women.

[2] *The Department should identify ways to “localize” its curriculum or pedagogy, highlighting more explicitly the links between its course content (and co-curricular programs) and issues or concerns facing the Sacramento region.*

Most of the sources consulted for this review endorsed the proposition that the Department, despite its applied ethics focus, was not taking maximal advantage of its geographic location. Few of its courses and relatively little of its co-curricular activities invite reflection on problems specific to, or that have an especially strong valence in, the Sacramento region. These efforts could include guest speakers from local governments, businesses, and institutions, as well as conferences or other events with regional foci. Such efforts could strengthen the Department's relationships with the community and with other university departments, as well as attracting students who perceive philosophy as a tool for identifying and resolving challenges facing their own communities.

[3] *The Department should retain its Logic and Philosophy of Science (LPS) track while considering a rebranding that better integrates LPS into the Department's applied ethics identity.*

The Department's Focused Inquiry contained some discussion and concern regarding the viability of the LPS program. I see no basis for its discontinuance. While small, it has grown significantly since its inception and the faculty perceive it to be a high-quality program that attracts some of the Department's strongest students. Some rebranding of the program might be welcome, all the same, particularly to integrate the program into the Department's applied ethics identity. (I would propose that 'technology' be prominent in that rebranding, in addition to 'science.')

[4] *The Department should further clarify its relationship to Center for Practical and Professional Ethics and (in recognition of the service commitment involved in directing the Center) minimize the Center director's other departmental or university service.*

The Center's programs provide valuable visibility for the Philosophy Department on campus and serve to reinforce the Department's 'applied ethics' identity. That said, greater clarity should be sought concerning the relationship between the Center and the Department. I note that, in its public representation, the Center does not strongly identify itself with philosophy or the Philosophy Department (aside from a single mention of utilizing the Center to support Department efforts to secure student internships). It is not out of the range of possibility for the Center's programs to become sufficiently successful that other University programs might wish to encroach on what appears to be, thus far, a Philosophy-driven initiative. So is it anticipated, for instance, that the Center will be administered by the Department and directed by a philosophy faculty member in perpetuity, or is there any prospect of its administration migrating elsewhere in the university? Likewise, how, if at all, do the Center's programs reinforce the Department's curriculum, or vice versa? Finally, if the relationship between the Center and the Department is clarified such that the Center is viewed as a Department initiative, the Department should forthrightly acknowledge that directing the Center, while a welcome opportunity for professional development and leadership, functions as *Departmental* service for which the Director should enjoy a commensurate reduction in other departmental service obligations.

[5] *The Department should undertake an initiative to ensure that a prescribed percentage of texts assigned in its courses (20%) are by women authors.*

(The rationale for this recommendation is contained in the discussion of the Department's Focused Inquiry, p. 10 below.)

[6] *The Department should pursue more aggressive approaches to student advising, including mandatory office hours or the placement of registration holds for students who have not received regular mandated advising.*

Discussions with students and alumni underscored that academic advising and other forms of interaction with faculty are readily available within the Department. However, those same discussions underscored the perception that students must be proactive in seeking out opportunities for faculty interaction — that students often will not have substantial intellectual or professional interactions as a matter of course during their time in the Department. (Such comments were often explicitly linked to career guidance.) Furthermore, as the discussion of the Focused Inquiry (below) suggests, students often make choices regarding (a) the order in which they pursue their coursework, and (b) their overall courseload, that extend time to degree. To that end, the Department should consider a more aggressive approach to advising, mandating advising and/or making visiting faculty office hours a requirement in some courses.

[7] *In considering future hiring strategy, the Department should focus on the need for tenure-track faculty to provide the advising and close student attention essential to student success.*

There has been much talk in higher ed, and within the CSU in particular, about the often overlooked disadvantages of increasingly high reliance on non-tenure-accruing faculty for instruction. Inasmuch as non-tenure accruing faculty do not have service responsibilities, this high reliance enables higher levels of student enrollment but tends to increase the administrative and advising load for tenure-accruing faculty, as well as siphoning time and energy away from those faculty required to conduct research. Moreover, it reduces the frequency or depth of contact between students and faculty presumed to have a long-term relationship with the institution, thus undermining student success. Such concerns have understandably given rise to calls to increase ‘tenure density’.

Sac State’s Philosophy Department illustrates some of the concerns related to tenure density. The Department has a sincere commitment to student success, but in conversations with faculty, it was apparent that this commitment places strains on their other professional responsibilities. These are not, given the contractually bargained limitations on lecturer duties, strains that can be relieved by additional lecturer hiring. There are not, as best as I can tell, glaring gaps in the Department’s faculty ‘coverage’ of the main areas of philosophy. Hence, in thinking about its personnel strategy, the Department should consider emphasizing the need to increase its number of tenured faculty as much its curricular needs. Curricular needs can never, of course, be irrelevant to academic staffing, and the Department must be mindful of these and avoid unnecessary duplication of faculty areas of expertise. All the same, its strongest argument for additional tenure lines is likely to be grounded in the need for tenure-accruing faculty in order to provide the intensive attention to teaching, advising, etc., essential to realizing the Department’s commitment to student success. I would thus encourage the Department to pay careful attention to administrative initiatives related to tenure-density and to be open to the prospect of hiring in areas that it had not previously contemplated.

[8] *The Department should offer an Ethics Bowl course and co-curricular activity.*

Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (<http://appe-ethics.org/ethics-bowl/>) is a high impact and high visibility activity that would be a strong fit for the Department’s applied ethics identity. It also provides students with a culminating academic experience in which they publicly demonstrate their abilities. It thus tends to attract motivated, high-achieving students to the major. In addition, it creates a set of very articulate student ambassadors to advocate for ethics education. It would also give students ample opportunity to develop their abilities in oral communication and teamwork, two areas where, based on prior alumni surveys, the Department was found to be comparatively less effective.

These advantages notwithstanding, Ethics Bowl presents considerable logistical and pedagogical challenges. Funding for the requisite student travel must be secured. My own experience furthermore suggests that Ethics Bowl thrives when departments integrate it into their curriculum and have an instructor willing to commit to the course for a multi-year span.

[9] *The Department should communicate more regularly with lecturers about departmental or university developments likely to affect lecturers' worklife (for example, through a once-a-semester electronic newsletter).*

As noted earlier, relationships among the faculty are strong. That said, lecturers may benefit from being kept more up to date about developments, both at the Departmental and university level, that bear on their worklife and work responsibilities. This could easily take the form of a once-a-semester electronic newsletter from the Chair, providing an overview of recent Departmental governance issues relevant to lecturers and modifications to University policies germane to lecturers' work (for instance, the cessation of remediation and its likely impact on GE teaching.)

[10] *The Department should implement initiatives to foster greater contact among students and/or alumni, including peer mentoring.*

When it comes to areas outside of their perceived expertise, faculty are often less credible to students than are other students and alumni. Constituencies consulted for this review indicated that they would welcome the Department facilitating greater contact among students and/or alumni, especially for purposes such as career guidance/networking and academic support. A peer mentor program is one form that such initiatives might take.

[11] *The Department should explore ways to support faculty scholarship at critical junctures in arcs of research.*

The Department has the good fortune of having many highly engaged researchers. An established body of research indicates that for faculty at teaching-oriented institutions, especially in the humanities, judiciously timed interventions can have significant positive impact on research productivity. The Department should explore ways of supporting modestly reduced teaching responsibilities for tenure-accruing faculty at critical junctures in arcs of research. It could accomplish this by (for instance) agreeing to a miniscule increase in enrollment caps so as to facilitate 1-2 courses of release time per semester for faculty at such junctures. This release time could be allocated on the basis of criteria such as: whether faculty have received recent 'revise and resubmits' requiring their attention; whether faculty have received speaking invitations, etc., for which preparation is necessary; whether faculty are positioned, on the basis of their existing research record, to submit book proposals to academic presses; probationary status; time since their last research-related reduction in teaching responsibilities; etc. In a university system where pre-tenure course release is not the norm, such an intervention would be a worthwhile investment in faculty scholarly productivity.

#### FOCUSED INQUIRY: DISCUSSION

For its Focused Inquiry, the Department undertook an analysis of five years of data concerning its recent graduates in order to determine how effectively it is promoting university outcome

related to graduation rates, time to degree, etc. This analysis categorized data in terms of concentration (General vs. Ethics, Politics, and Law vs. LPS), gender, natives vs. transfers, previous major, minor, year to degree, additional major, student courseload, grade point average, etc. The Department intended this analysis to identify “remediable impediments to earning a degree in Philosophy in a timely manner” that could in turn be addressed via its learning outcomes, its degree roadmaps, and advising.

By and large, the findings of this inquiry are reassuringly unremarkable: Aside from its Honors students, there are not significant variations in GPA across concentrations; students with higher GPA’s have lower times to degree; transfer students arriving at Sac State with the intention of majoring in philosophy have lower times to degree than ‘native’ students who switch to philosophy; that student course loads are often insufficient for them to graduate in four years’ time; etc.

Two issues merit discussion, however. The first is the worry that students are often taking too few courses and/or taking courses in sequences that inhibit their academic progress. Two of the earlier recommendations ([1], the introduction of a methods-based seminar, and [6] more proactive approaches to advising) may be relevant to this worry.

The second concerns the gender composition of the student body. Faculty express some surprise that approximately two-thirds of their recent graduates are male. I concur with the observation that this is not an unflattering result compared to many other philosophy departments. Nevertheless, that number is somewhat less encouraging given that the University’s overall female enrollment is 55%. Or put differently: Philosophy’s female population is itself only about two-thirds of the university average.

That faculty are open to solutions to this problem is admirable. One possibility is the hiring of more female faculty. This has the drawback that the Department would have to secure additional faculty hires — no sure thing in the financial environment of the CSU. A promising approach that could be implemented quickly would be for the Department to commit to a certain percentage of authors on its syllabi (20% as a floor) being women. There is some evidence that women may opt not to continue in philosophy past the introductory level because the discipline is perceived as having a male ‘gender schema’. (See Thompson, Adleberg, Sims, and Nahmias, “Why Do Women Leave Philosophy?: Surveying Students at the Introductory Level,” *Philosophers’ Imprint* 16 (2016). For a more popular treatment, see Flaherty, “The 20% Experiment,” *Inside Higher Ed* (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/06/28/georgia-state-tries-new-approach-attract-more-female-students-philosophy>). Increasing the proportion of female authors challenges this schema and may therefore impress upon women students that philosophy is open to their contributions. Given the high level of cohesiveness within the Department surrounding teaching, this measure would not be difficult to implement.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Department of Philosophy is in a noticeably healthier state than it was at the time of its previous program review. It has grown in size while simultaneously pursuing a very proactive strategy toward student learning and student success. Its faculty take their work and this mission

very seriously, and as a result, the Department provides a high quality education to its students. This conclusion can be inferred from the Department's 2015-16 Annual Assessment Report Template, according to which a clear majority of students are competent with respect to Department learning outcomes such as 'Inquiry, Analysis, and Synthesis.'

The Department has made important strides in becoming more intentional as a unit. This is evident in its transformation from a Department that, based on concerns about its assessment efforts, was granted provisional approval after its 2010 program review, to one that is lauded for the thoroughness and care with which it now undertakes assessment. The Department's applied ethics focus suits its position within the University, as well as reflecting a growing interest within the discipline in the practical application of philosophical knowledge. By offering several distinct academic programs, the Department has situated itself to attract students with a diversity of backgrounds and interests. At the same time though, the Department's faculty share a clear understanding of the heart of the philosophical enterprise and what a student with a philosophical education should be expected to know. This shared understanding is most evident in its use of a common rubric and template for analytical essays.

The Department can therefore point to many tangible accomplishments. Perhaps more critical in the long term though are its intangible accomplishments, specifically, the student-focused culture that has taken root among its faculty. 'Student success' is not, for Sac State's Department of Philosophy, a marketing slogan or a cosmetic label. It has instead permeated the faculty's expectations of their students and of one another. I know of few departments, for example, in which faculty teaching is assessed as regularly, systematically, or comprehensively. The Department should be credited for its forthrightness in addressing gender disparities among its majors. This difficulty is a discipline-wide challenge, and it should be kept in mind that the Department has limited power to address it (it has little influence over, for example, the demographics of the students entering the University or wider public perceptions of philosophy). Nevertheless, the strong student-focused culture within the Department suggest that it is likely to be as successful as any philosophy program in addressing gender disparities among its students.

Eight years is a long time, even in the sometimes sclerotic world of universities. The Department has built on strengths present at the time of its previous program review and has become a very energetic and well-regarded academic unit on campus. It would, in my estimation, be wildly unjust for the Department of Philosophy not to be given the full endorsement and approval of the Program Review Committee, faculty bodies, and administrators. All in all, the recommendations provided herein are offered in the spirit of helping the Department to realize *fully* a mission that it is already realizing to a very high degree.

Your assignment is to write an analytical essay of the following article. Be sure your essay conforms to the basic requirements for writing analytical essays. Clearly label each section of the essay.

Remember that whether you agree or disagree with this article is of no real interest. The question at issue here is whether you are able to provide a fair and interesting critical perspective regardless of your personal views.

A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: OUR EDUCATIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS AND THE ECONOMY  
Adrian Brockless

The matter of education is never far from the headlines, frequently taking centre stage. In a now famous speech, Tony Blair placed an economically based conception of it at the centre of his 1997 election campaign. More recently, since the onset of the economic crisis, educational institutions have come under the spotlight in terms of what they are able to contribute to the economic welfare of the nation.

doi:10.1017/S147717561600035X # The Royal Institute of Philosophy, 2017  
*Think* 45, Vol. 16 (Spring 2017)

This has resulted in universities being instructed to optimize their research and teaching in areas that are most likely to have immediate social and economic impact. Inevitably, closures and attempted closures of university departments have followed. These closures (or attempts at them) have been motivated and, to a large extent, justified by the university senior management teams that have implemented them, on grounds of economic utility; generally speaking, the victims have been disciplines that characterize the arts and humanities.

Individuals are asked to buy into this argument on grounds of increased personal wealth. The overarching idea, of course, is that overall improved economic performance will serve to improve the individual living standards of citizens. There is nothing wrong in that *per se* – indeed it is an admirable goal – but when it is done at the expense of aspects of our lives that nourish meaning and understanding of the human condition, it becomes damaging in ways that run far deeper than seem immediately obvious.

Understanding the idea of schools and universities in society is directly related to our conception of education. What do they provide? In the media, and in life more generally outside the academic environment, their value is generally considered to centre on their importance to the economy; watching an episode of the BBC's *Question Time* should be enough to assure you of that.

Such emphasis has served to encourage thought that academic life – particularly in more established universities – is often significantly detached from our typical ways of living. For that reason, many outside the academic sphere are apt to criticize it as retreating into ivory towers and away from 'the real world'. The 'value for money' argument, in terms of projected 'real world' economic return, is frequently employed by politicians to justify their policy decisions and, to a large extent, the popular media in their critical discussions of the amount of state funding that such ivory towers should receive. Universities, it would seem, exist to educate students for the jobs market and, insofar as they

comprise communities of academics (experts in their field), serve as research institutions to further knowledge that will directly benefit the economy.

Thus, today, even within universities, the idea of education as something that is purely a means to an end is becoming more pervasive than ever. Many arts and humanities disciplines are, at best, conceived of as adornments to the proper business of the day, something that a few naive academic idealists indulge in but, otherwise, are of little value. The idea that one should dedicate oneself to a discipline rather than a solid career (sometimes termed ‘a proper job’) is seen as quaint in others and, more than occasionally, as proper cause for shame in our nearest and dearest. In tandem with this is the thought that education for its own sake – as something that can nurture an individual’s love of the world – is an anachronism; a view now only held by outdated academics with a rather ‘precious’ attitude towards it. This kind of thinking has resulted in the development of utilitarian degrees such as *Business Administration*, *Tourism* and *Education Management*; worthy though such courses may be, they are far removed from authentic forms of academic life that boast disciplines with distinguished academic histories; histories characterized by faithful commitment to those disciplines, as opposed to extrinsic justifications of them.

Within this cultural climate, many parents discourage their offspring from considering arts-based subjects at university because they perceive them to be disadvantageous to their offspring’s job prospects, and even some teachers – appallingly in my view – suggest that pursuing arts and humanities subjects at undergraduate level is a ‘soft’ option. Those who still elect to study disciplines such as philosophy, literature, fine art or music often face questions such as, ‘what are you going to do with that?’ or condescending comments implying that they cannot expect a free ride and need to be prepared to give something back to society.

What is to be made of all of this? Are economic imperatives what education really boils down to?

At their core, our educational institutions need to maintain a certain resistance to the external cultural pressures of their times. By that, I do not mean that they should disregard the cultural climate in which they are embedded, or that how they educate should be unresponsive to that cultural climate; were that the case, our education would, obviously, be incomplete. However, I am saying that one should treat our current values, beliefs, and how we think about them, in ways that do not – automatically at least – assume them to be superior to other ways of thinking that might nourish different forms of thought and, as such, forms of life. Understanding what counts as properly relating to those beliefs in a particular cultural setting will ensure that one is given the space that allows one to come into contact with them in ways that make it possible for us to assess them soberly, rather than as merely anachronisms or the products of ‘traditions’ or ‘social norms’. That is the space that universities (as ivory towers) provide, and why arts and humanities degrees are so valuable. The arts and humanities allow us to come into direct contact with forms of thought from other times and cultures as well as our own; the universities provide a protective bubble in which our assessment of them is unhindered by the cultural and political pressures of the times. When such values and beliefs are treated as anachronisms or ‘traditions’, their authority to speak to us with the same force that they once held – or with the kind of force that our current values now hold – is compromised. The role of an arts and humanities education is fundamental to understanding the distinctions that we draw between such things, and – more importantly – why we draw them.

Anachronistic though the concept of ivory towers may seem to be in contemporary culture, they are fundamental to the perpetuation of individual independence of mind; yet that is precisely why they are not thought of as ‘part of the real world’. It is the latter thought – that of living in the ‘real world’ as opposed to an ivory tower – which is symptomatic of a form of understanding that sees universities as wholly answerable to the idea of ‘what can be done with

them'. As progressively greater pressure is applied to universities to become 'more relevant to the modern age' by threatening funding cuts unless they comply with government wishes, the protective bubble with which such institutions shield their academics and students will burst. That is what is happening now with the funding cuts that are resulting in the proposed and actual closures of departments within the arts and humanities.

In a number of Plato's dialogues the character Socrates expresses the thought that human life provides the possibility of infinitely deepening one's understanding, knowledge and love of the world.<sup>1</sup> If, in principle, we accept this thought, then it follows that to neglect such a possibility in favour of focusing on economic imperatives, either actively or passively, is not fully to realize human capability. Are we wholeheartedly to neglect such a capability in favour of the economic argument? Certainly, if we do so, the possibility of the perpetuation of independence of mind is compromised insofar as how we are 'educated' will be limited to what has been understood to yield most economic benefit. The reason for my use of inverted commas around 'educated' is because such an economically based conception of education is really just a species of training. Training sets limits around what is learnt because it is accountable to particular ends; education can have no such limits (there is no end in sight). This is a straightforward conceptual difference; education is about the development of individual independence of mind and the possibility of perpetually deepening one's thinking; training is not.

Nevertheless, I doubt the thoughts expressed immediately above would cut much ice with those arguing for an economically driven conception of education. One can imagine responses of the kind: 'We don't care about education in terms of deepened understanding and a love of the world; we care about the mighty dollar! Express your conception of education in dollars, and then we will care; otherwise it's just navel gazing! What we need to do is get on with the proper business of the day!'

What is puzzling however, particularly in terms of humanities education, is that the economic argument does not seem to apply to the same extent in relation to healthcare. The government would be seen as cruel if it denied healthcare to the elderly or terminally ill, even though to do so would be an economically beneficial strategy. Similarly, billions of pounds have been spent on a Large Hadron Collider which does nothing of economic value; it seeks only to pursue the unknown, but doubtless at the expense of investment in areas that would yield substantial economic reward. Interestingly, in this latter case, much less is heard in relation to the thought that such scientific developments are worthless unless they have immediate social and economic impact.

These attitudes, together with the development of policies, in relation to education, healthcare and science are based on questions of value; such questions are, at their core, philosophical, and the answers to them are not written into the fabric of the universe, or the disciplines themselves. Accordingly, there is a certain irony in the present economically driven attitude towards humanities education because it is such education which concerns itself with deepening our understanding and knowledge of the attitudes and values which are internal to such policy developments and our assessments of them. Put another way: the belief that education is of little value beyond what it can do for the economy, and that our educational institutions should be accountable to market forces, appeals to the very dimensions of education that it labels as redundant or navel gazing.

It is humanities disciplines, such as history and philosophy, that specialize in understanding the kinds of value we place on scientific advances and questions about prioritizing life over money (or vice versa) in relation to healthcare of the elderly. Doubtless, those who advocate the economically driven conception of education have their reasons for valuing it the way they do, and perhaps can also justify why they would treat healthcare of the elderly differently.

However, all of these positions (and their justifications) are based, in one way or another, on ideas about what it is good to value and why. A nuanced understanding of values cannot be addressed by the sciences because the modes of thought that characterize good and bad thinking in terms of understanding questions of value are not those that characterize good and bad scientific thought. One cannot, for example, criticize a scientific proposition for being sentimental without collapsing into nonsense (although one can reveal faults in a scientific investigation and its associated results that are caused by sentimentality), but one can intelligibly criticize an approach to healthcare in relation to the elderly on such grounds.

It is also worth noting that there are numerous cases of people who have spent much of their lives dedicated to the accumulation of wealth and prestige, only to suffer a personal tragedy and find out that that was not what really mattered to them after all. In such cases, as the moral philosopher Raimond Gaita explains, '[w]e have mistaken as the source of value that which was merely necessary to us, without which our lives would have appeared senseless to us'.<sup>2</sup> Such a mistake is often only understood after the loss of a loved one, for instance, and is frequently characterized as a form of deepened understanding. Deep thought provides us with the possibility of encountering and nurturing ways of thinking previously unknown to us – that is a conceptual truth about the notion of deep thought and is why we tend to describe such reassessments as exemplifying forms of it.

I am not denying that education has great economic value – it does, and we should all understand the need for a stable economy and what measures are required to attain it; similarly, academics and students need to understand that they should not be immune from the consequences of the economic crisis. That said, it is not in anyone's interests to limit education to answerability to social and economic impact. Our best interests lie in nurturing the education of every individual, irrespective of his or her predicted

subsequent social and economic performance. What such individuals 'give back' to society may take many forms (not necessarily economic or technological) and may also take a number of years to achieve. Sometimes what they can be said to have 'given back' may forever resist statistical quantification. This has been particularly true of many respected cultural figures – for instance, Martin Amis, Graham Greene, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie, many of whose novels have, in multifarious ways, nourished our understanding of the values that support our ethical judgements. Moreover, who are we to judge that such an impoverished economically driven conception of education is a worthy inheritance to bequeath to our children? It is a strange and worrying kind of arrogance which claims to know that depriving them of the prospect of entering a world of education, which makes it possible for them to deepen their understanding, knowledge and love of the world without limit, is all for the good (not to mention knowing it is something they would want).

In any case, the phrase 'giving back to society' is pejorative, but it is one that has been used with increasing frequency in the debate about justifying funding for arts and humanities subjects in higher education. It suggests that society has put itself out to provide such an education, and that those who receive it are morally (or financially) in debt to it. Yet those in education do not exist outside society; they are a part of it. Students who have benefited from an arts and humanities education have not acted as parasites on society; their interests simply run counter to the interests or opinions of others. That is how society functions and what defines it as such. Those who claim that students are required to give something back are merely expressing ways of promoting their own sectional interests by dressing them up as more legitimate; by saying that their interests are those of society rather than those they are opposed to.<sup>3</sup>

A properly educated society – one that has read many of the great philosophical, literary and historical texts of the past and listened to its music, as opposed to one just

geared towards particular ends – will understand itself better, as well as being able to rise more effectively to the demands of unpredictable external pressures. If our education system continues to be subject to the short-sighted opinions and ideologies of politicians and university management structures, then we run the risk of being reduced to trading purely on the intellectual capital of our past, and that will eventually have an adverse social and economic effect. The persuasive argument that a subject is only practical if it benefits the jobs market (and the economy more generally) is a spurious one. For if courses such as philosophy, music or history are designed and delivered with the thought in mind that they are ultimately answerable to the economy and employment figures (as opposed to themselves), then, whatever it is one is doing, it will not, in the end, be that discipline, but rather training for just one thing. This is as true for science subjects as it is for humanities subjects. Put another way: *if an institution is sincere in offering a discipline and a student is sincere in their study of it, then neither can contrast the demands of that discipline with what is practical in terms of graduate employability or economic growth. Anything else amounts to an inauthentic study of a discipline because the standards by which it would be judged would not be those of the discipline itself.*

Money is necessary to improve standards of living and help others, so we should not stop trying to attain it. But to take it as the ultimate arbiter of value, as something we ought to dedicate our lives to – on pain of shame or disapproval – is to confuse the necessary with the good. For us to think lucidly about what really matters, we need to attain clarity about the differences between what is necessary and what is good, attending to the realms of meaning – exemplified in the humanities – that nourish our sense of that distinction. Someone, for example, who puts material gain above the welfare of other human beings is generally thought of as someone who ought to be ashamed of himself even if he feels no shame (consider some of the more senior figures implicated in the banking crisis, for instance). By contrast, someone who selflessly gives their

earnings to those in need, or raises money for charity, is morally revered. It is plain that economic welfare and individual wealth and prestige assist us in helping others, but it is equally plain that such things are not, by themselves, arbiters of human value and, consequently, do not assist us in deepening our understanding of why it matters that we should help others (or, for that matter, increase the economic performance of a nation).

Artists (musicians, poets, painters, novelists, philosophers, etc.) and their arts, together with academics, enliven the life of a culture and, by implication, contribute to its education. How often does one appeal to the arts for lucidity in times of trouble? How often do we turn to poetry and music at points in our lives where meaning really matters – such as at funerals or weddings? What good reason is there for us to ignore the skills necessary to express, reveal and deepen the forms of thought that characterize these aspects of our lives, when they are fundamental to the ways in which we put value on human life and its activities? Would we want unskilled poetry and music at our weddings and funerals, sloppily expressing thoughts that mean so much? In each of these cases, skills associated with the arts allow us to express attitudes from standpoints nourished by our grasp of an idea and the individual artist's treatment of it.

Nevertheless, leaving aside the obvious economic benefits of the production of films and the expertly crafted and performed scripts and music that are required for their success (together with the fact that so much money-making technology has developed in order for us to enjoy the arts in the comfort of our own homes), as an advocate of the economically based conception of education, one might still ask whether we really need new poems, music, and the like. After all, the same music is invariably used at most weddings and funerals, so why pay for anything new?

Novelty is a misleading way of thinking about humanities education because it is wrong to think that deepened thought and new thought amount to the same thing. The

development of new thoughts sometimes requires deepened thought, but it is by no means always so; one can have plenty of new thoughts without being a deep thinker. Nothing in an economically accountable conception of education excludes the possibility of new thoughts (indeed, it often requires them) but it does, to a large degree, exclude the possibility of deepened thought, because it fails to notice that deepened thought requires a non-economically answerable attentiveness to the ways in which we treat our current value-concepts. Frequently, such ways of thinking are deepened by differing artistic treatments of existing concepts – consider, for instance, the (different) contributions Mozart, Fauré and Duruflé have made to the idea of a requiem and how such contributions have served to enliven that concept.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes, of course, artistic treatments of concepts can leave previously poignant expressions of them vulnerable to cliché or parody – consider, for instance, the way in which Richard Curtis’s film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* treats W. H. Auden’s treatment of the concept of mourning in his poem ‘Stop All The Clocks’. However we conceive of those examples, the failure to attend to current thinking about value-concepts in ways that provide the possibility of deepening our understanding of them goes hand-in-hand with the failure to provide a protective bubble in which such attentiveness provides the forum for evaluation (of ways of thinking) that is not answerable to the economic imperatives of the age.

The enrichment that such artistic activities and their associated ways of thinking contribute to our own lives, in terms of providing the tools for us to better understand the most joyous and tragic points in them, also enable us to understand one another better by providing us with a richer conception of what it means to be human. And, as I have already discussed, developing such ways of thinking, unencumbered by thoughts about economic accountability, will further enable us to respond to unforeseen external pressures placed on us by our competitors, because we will be more able to identify (and understand) how we relate to

them – not merely in economic terms but in human terms also. That is why our educational institutions should continue to fund disciplines in the humanities and provide a protective bubble in which the thinking that characterizes such disciplines can be protected from the pressures of the times.

Thus, even if one remains unimpressed by the argument that we should fund education for its own sake, it needs to be understood that allowing the opportunity for students to enter an academic form of life where nothing matters more than to rise to the highest standards within their chosen discipline will, in the end, prove more beneficial to the welfare (in all senses) of a country than making education merely answerable to particular ends.

An enlivened conception of what it means to be human, nourished by the arts and associated academic disciplines, has the potential to enrich a life beyond measure. It is, I believe, an obligation to make such education available, because it is only through doing so that we may rise to the possibilities allowed for by human life; certainly, the pursuing of a discipline for its own sake should not be an activity for which one is made to feel ashamed. Moreover, those who claim that studying arts and humanities subjects limits one's options are making such an assessment from the economic standpoint (statistics do not, in fact, support this view; it has been shown that humanities graduates have a wide range of employment options open to them<sup>5</sup>).<sup>6</sup> If however, one conceives of education as answerable to the idea that human life provides the possibility of infinitely deepening one's understanding, knowledge and love of the world, then whatever one studies will, in some sense, widen one's options through making available forms of thought that one had never before contemplated. That should be all that is needed to persuade someone of the merits of education for its own sake. Nevertheless, for those who remain unconvinced, it is worth remembering that so many of the technological products that are necessary for the economic welfare of the country are tied up with the kinds of unencumbered thought characterized and

expressed in the arts and authentic academic life. We like to watch television dramas, listen to the radio, enjoy music through personal audio equipment, and watch films on tablets whilst commuting, for example.

If we allow dimensions of our artistic and academic culture to be lost through a single-minded pursuit of wealth, we estrange ourselves from forms of thought that are, more often than not, united with our conception of what it means to be human and, consequently, put the long-term welfare of future generations at risk by depriving our children of a wonderful artistic and academic inheritance together with secure, long-term, economic welfare.

*Adrian Brockless was on the academic staff of Heythrop College, University of London from 2006 to 2015 and Head of Philosophy at Sutton Grammar School from 2012 to 2015. He is currently a guest lecturer for the International School of Philosophy and a tutor for the Workers' Educational Association. [a.brockless@gmail.com](mailto:a.brockless@gmail.com)*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See especially the Platonic dialogues *The Apology* and *Gorgias*.

<sup>2</sup> R. Gaita, *A Common Humanity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), 242.

<sup>3</sup> R. Rhees, 'Responsibility to Society', in *Without Answers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969), 88.

<sup>4</sup> R. Rhees, 'Art and Philosophy', in *Without Answers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969), 140.

<sup>5</sup> D. Matthews, 'Oxford Survey Finds Humanities Degrees Pay', *Times Higher Education*, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/oxford-survey-finds-humanities-degrees-pay/2005628.article> . [accessed 18 November 2014].

<sup>6</sup> R. Garner, 'Education Secretary Nicky Morgan Tells Teenagers: Want to Keep Your Options Open? Then Do Science', *The Independent*: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/education-secretary-nicky-morgan-tells-teenagers-if-you-want-a-job-drop-humanities-9852316.html> . [accessed 18 November 2014].

Philosophy Department Assessment Plan (taken from pp. 12-13 of the *Philosophy Department Updated Report on the Academic Program Review 2010*)

---

***Assessment Plan for Implementation (Revised, Starting Spring 2013)***

1. This Spring semester, the Assessment Committee will assemble three to five faculty who will assess ***ten anonymized, randomly selected Philosophical Analyses*** submitted by majors from each of the following classes:
  - a. Both the Fall/12 and Spr/13 sections of the ***capstone course (189)***. These will be assessed against the Program Values Rubric. Ideally, these graduating majors will indicate proficient achievement of the Philosophy Core learning goals.
  - b. ***PHIL 180***, which is in the newly created core coursework and is typically taken by majors in their junior and senior years. These will be assessed against the Program Values Rubric for the Philosophy Core learning goals. The expectation is that these students will reveal proficiency in the range from competent to proficient.
  - c. ***PHIL 152***, which is an ethics course in the newly created core coursework and is required in the Ethics Politics and Law Concentration. It is typically taken by majors in their junior and senior year. Though students in the major and LPS concentrations may take this course as one of two ethics courses required, it will be used to assess the EPL concentration by narrowing the selection of sample PAs to those submitted by EPL majors. The committee will assess these Analyses using the Program Values Rubric. Ideally, students will indicate achievement of the Concentration Specific learning goals in the range between competent and proficient.
  - d. ***PHIL 153***, which is a required course in the Logic and Philosophy of Science concentration. It is typically taken by majors in their junior or senior year. Though students in the major and EPS concentrations may take this course as one of four LPS courses required, it will be used to assess the LPS concentration by narrowing the selection of sample PAs to those submitted by LPS majors. The committee will assess these PAs using the Program Values Rubric. Ideally, students will indicate achievement of the Concentration Specific learning goals in the range between competent and proficient.
  
2. This spring semester, the assessment committee will ***review a sample of ten senior essays, submitted in 189 during the 2012-13 academic year***. A sample of ten essays will be assessed against the Program Values Rubric for proficiency in the Philosophy Core.

The purpose of assessing the senior essays in addition to the PA from the same students is to allow for the possibility that students may reveal different abilities in a studied and revised essay, which requires a sustained, independent argument, developed on a specific topic through a series of revisions under faculty guidance, than is apparent through a highly structured and timed assignment as the PA in this class. The latter tests

a student's ability to demonstrate philosophical acumen in regard to providing a structured critical analysis of an article, which they must read and comprehend in the scope of the timed exam. Although philosophical acumen and reflection is not typically associated with rapidity, the department still regards the ability to apply the skills learned under a time constraint as a measure of the degree to which they have been acquired and effectively internalized. This should be an indication that the students have been cultivated and have internalized the philosophical core over the length and breadth of their time in the program. The senior essay, it is the department's belief, will reveal the degree to which our majors have acquired the skills of patient deliberation, collaborative editing (with their faculty mentor), and creative inquiry in the development and support an argument on a topic of their choice. This will demonstrate the degree to which the program has been successful in fostering the kind of creative and critical inquiry that sustains a lifelong philosophical orientation.

3. This spring semester, the Assessment Committee will collect and review the results of the **graduating seniors' exit survey**. This exit survey was finalized and implemented in the Fall/12. Patterns in student responses, especially to key questions, will be examined for feedback on the program to be used to assess whether the program is succeeding from the students point of view. Crucial will be indicators that students perceive the program to be value-adding to their lives. Where problems, limitations or weaknesses in the program are revealed, the Assessment Committee will join with the Curriculum Committee to determine whether and what actions might be taken to improve the program.
4. This spring will make the first semester for which we will be able to **collect data from the Assessment Survey for a subset of philosophy courses on a three year rotation**. Over the summer, the Assessment Committee will review the results of this assessment instrument to ensure that courses are being taught with the same eye toward quality and reliability. Any patterns found in the results which are indicative of a problem with the reliability of student assessment in courses will be brought to the curriculum committee for consultation and further action.
5. Early Fall/13 the department will hold a meeting specifically devoted to reviewing the assessment report for AY 2012-13. The department has committed to holding such an annual assessment meeting to ensure everyone in the department is aware of the results of the report from the previous year's program assessment and to determine when and where improvement can be made. All members of the department will be encouraged to participate and contribute, as all are stake-holders in the quality of the program and in assessing our good works.

# PHILOSOPHY: ETHICS, POLITICS, and LAW

# FOUR YEAR PLAN

Minimum total units required for B.A. Degree: 120  Major Requirements total 40 units.

Additional courses may be needed to meet remediation requirements in English and/or Math prior to completing GE requirements: A2 & B4  
 This form is designed to be used in partnership with GE and Major advisors - modifications may be necessary to meet the unique needs of each student. Seek assistance each semester to stay on track and graduate!

<b>YEAR 1</b>	Sem. 1	GE A3 (PHIL 4)	GE A1	GE A2	GE B1 or B2	GE E (FYS)	15 UNITS
	Sem. 2	GE C2 (PHIL 2/6/26)	GE C2 (PHIL 2/6/26)	GE D (US HIST)	GE B4	Elective	16 UNITS

<b>YEAR 2</b>	Sem. 3	GE C2 (PHIL 2/6/26)	PHIL 60 or 61	GE B1 or B2 w/B3	Comp (ENGL 20)	GE D (US GOV'T)	16 UNITS
	Sem. 4	Elective (PHIL 60 or 61)	GE B5-UD (PHIL 125)	GE C1	GE D+	Elective	15 UNITS

<b>YEAR 3</b>	Sem. 5	PHIL 127	PHIL 122 (GE C-UD)	PHIL 104 or 103 (GE D-UD)	Elective	Elective	15 UNITS
	Sem. 6	PHIL 128	PHIL 100, 101*, or 102	PHIL 153, 154, 160 or 176	Elective	Elective	15 UNITS

<b>YEAR 4</b>	Sem. 7	PHIL 112* (GE C-UD)	PHIL 180	PHIL 190 or 192	Elective	Elective	15 UNITS
	Sem. 8	PHIL 152	PHIL 155	PHIL 181	PHIL 189 (1u)	Elective	13 UNITS

**KEY:** Major requirements (Dark Green), GE/graduation requirements (Light Green), Electives (non-PHIL) (Yellow)

- Major requirements
- GE/graduation requirements
- Electives (non-PHIL)

**UD** Upper Division  
**+** Race & Ethnicity  
**\*** Writing Intensive (Complete WP) or substitute ENGL 109W/M for elective in Semester); WI must be completed within the major.  
**FL** If requirement was not met in high school or through testing, substitute two semesters of Foreign Language for electives.

**NOTES:**

- There is unlimited overlap between your major and GE courses.
- Elective courses may be used to satisfy a minor in another department.
- Writing Intensive completes the GVAR graduation requirement with C- in WI course.

**TOTAL = 120 UNITS**

