

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Doctoral	Department: Philosophy
Degree or Certificate Level: PhD	College/School: CAS
Date (Month/Year): 9/23	Primary Assessment Contact: Scott Ragland
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY 22-23	
In what year was the program’s assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2015	

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program’s student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

The ones in the far left column of the below rubric:

Learning Outcome	Fails to Meet Expectations (0 pts)	Meets Expectations 1 pt	Exceeds Expectations 2 pts
1. Assess relevant literature or scholarly contributions in philosophy.	Student fails to address essential relevant literature or fails to assess such literature.	Student addresses all essential relevant literature and assesses it.	Student’s assessment of relevant literature is unusually illuminating.
2. Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in philosophy.	Dissertation exhibits a lack of mastery of relevant theories, methods, or argumentative practices.	Dissertation shows mastery of some standard methods, theories, or argumentative practices.	Dissertation employs groundbreaking methods or synthesizes existing practices or theories in a novel way.
3. Apply knowledge from the field(s) of study to address problems in broader contexts [e.g., use knowledge of specific topic to advance broader disciplinary discussions]	The dissertation does not advance the state of the discussion on the chosen topic and shows little promise of developing into an early-career research program.	Student synthesizes information uncovered in extensive research to generate a novel thesis that advances the state of the discussion on the chosen topic. The dissertation has strong potential to be mined for future publications, whether articles or books.	The thesis of the dissertation is a “game changer” likely to be highly influential in the field.
4. Articulate arguments or explanations to a disciplinary or professional audience in both oral and written forms.	The dissertation does not clearly articulate arguments in a professional manner, or the student cannot defend such arguments in conversation at the defense.	The dissertation professionally articulates arguments and the student can further defend his or her position at the oral defense.	The dissertation’s arguments are unusually powerful or novel, or the student’s oral defense of them is unusually strong.
5. Evidence scholarly and/or professional integrity in the field of study.	Dissertation contains plagiarism or shoddy citation methods, and/or the student cannot properly defend it orally.	Dissertation is entirely the student’s own work and all sources are clearly cited.	Citation and bibliography are unusually thorough, so as to be especially helpful in understanding the relevant field.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

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

Doctoral Dissertations and their oral defenses. These “courses” were dissertation hours, not offered by way of (a)-(c) above.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

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

Dissertation committee members completed a google form version of the above rubric for each defended dissertation.

4. Data/Results

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

12 Doctoral Students completed the program and some feedback was received for each of them (see the attached results). Here is a summary of the scores for the current year

	Fails (0 pts)	Meets (1 pt)	Exceeds (2pts)
LOC 1: Assesses Relevant Literature	0	10	9
LOC 2: Apply philosophical methods	0	8	11
LOC 3: Address broader problems	1	11	7
LOC 4: Articulate argument oral/written	0	10	9
LOC 5: Integrity	0	8	10

And now the averages as compared to prior years:

	20/21 Acad Year	21/22 AY	22/23 AY
LOC 1: Assesses Relevant Literature	1.6	1.67	1.47
LOC 2: Apply philosophical methods	1.48	1.67	1.57
LOC 3: Address broader problems	1.48	1.58	1.3
LOC 4: Articulate argument oral/written	1.74	1.5	1.47
LOC 5: Integrity	1.6	1.58	1.56

An average score of 1 means that overall the students met expectations. These scores show that many students were exceeding expectations, and none were failing to meet expectations. The original survey responses are stored on google drive and can be shared with assessment officers upon request.

Since we would consider our program as adequately enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes if the average were “1,” these findings do not appear to call for program revision.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

What we learned about student learning: the students who complete the program are achieving all the learning goals. Given that the highest possible score is 2, these average scores are exceedingly high.

What we learned about the assessment process: Last year, we had 100% participation by faculty in the assessment process (up from 50% and 62% in the previous two years)! This year, participation was still strong but not quite as good. We should have had 21 faculty survey responses, and we only had 19 (90% participation). Still, it is a high enough rate to suggest that our processes for gathering data are pretty reliable. We will stick with those.

One participant (an external dissertation committee member, so not SLU faculty) wrote the following comment on the final open-ended rubric question:

“The student's dissertation and his oral defense were both very fine, indeed exceptional. My comment here concerns only the present "Dissertation Rubric" form. The last question asks, not about thoroughness of citation and bibliography, but about integrity. However, the third possible answer offered, "Exceeds Expectations," speaks only to thoroughness, not to integrity at all. In fact, it is not even clear what "exceeding expectations" regarding integrity means--certainly not that I had just modest expectations regarding the student's integrity before reading his dissertation, only to discover on reading it that he had more integrity than I ever expected. This really makes no sense. I know this student well, and his integrity is impeccable. For me to answer that his integrity exceeded my expectations could be interpreted as an insult. The rubric here is so rigid and incongruous, that the question appears to be have been designed by one robot while the possible answers appear to have been designed by a different robot. Since what is at issue is not simply a question regarding the student's intellectual expertise, but a question regarding his moral character, I am not comfortable giving a robotic response to it.”

This is a legitimate criticism, and in light of it, the dissertation rubric will be revised to focus on thoroughness rather than integrity.

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

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

The philosophy department discussed this report at a faculty meeting on September 29, 2023.
A copy of the report was mailed to the chair and CGS of Health Care Ethics due to item below at 7D.

- B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

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

Changes to the Assessment Plan

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

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

We are changing the description and rubric for the 5th learning outcome. See bottom of this form.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

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

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

No curricular changes have been made because data suggest that students are achieving the learning goals, and in fact are (on average) significantly exceeding expectations. However, at the end of the last two cycles, the following changes were proposed for assessment procedures:

- “To increase faculty participation in the assessment process, the chair and department admin will ask each dissertation supervisor to direct the committee to complete the google survey as they are completing the other dissertation dissertation defense paperwork as a group, right after the defense has been completed.”
- “The return of in-person dissertation defenses creates an opportunity increase faculty participation in the assessment process as follows. At each defense, the examination committee has a discussion about whether to assign a grade of “fail,” “pass,” or “pass with distinction.” The department office will write up instructions for dissertation chairs asking them to distribute a paper copy of the rubric to each committee member. Each examiner will be asked to complete the rubric on their own in preparation for the group grading discussion. This procedure change will connect the data-gathering instrument to an evaluative process that is occurring anyway at the time, and should lead to 100% faculty participation. Should we have to pivot back to zoom defenses, the google form version of the rubrics can be offered to examiners as an alternative way to inform their deliberations around the grading.”

I do not believe paper rubrics were ever distributed, but the department admin started emailing the survey to each committee member *prior* to a dissertation defense, and this seems to have produced the desired result.

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

These changes were assessed through tracking the faculty participation rate via the google surveys during 21-22 and 22-23.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

They worked. We achieved the goal of 100% participation last year, and 90% this year (with a larger group of graduating students).

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

We will continue to distribute the surveys at the same time as the examination ballots. We will continue to encourage committees to fill out the google survey at the defense, as part of the deliberation process for whether the student should fail, pass, or pass with distinction.

An additional bit of learning from this year’s assessment report: we did not get survey results from the dissertation defense of the first student to complete the joint PhD between PHIL and HCE. We need to develop a whole assessment plan for this joint program, since it is technically a separate degree from the standard PHIL PhD. This will require a meeting with HCE representatives and philosophy Chair/CGS.

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

REVISED LANGUAGE FOR #5:

5. Demonstrate mastery of scholarly citation methods and norms.	Dissertation contains shoddy or inconsistent citation methods.	All sources are clearly cited in a uniform manner.	Citations and bibliography are unusually thorough, so as to be especially helpful in understanding the relevant field.
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