

2012-2013 Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plan

Philosophy (CIP 38.01)

College of Liberal Arts
and Sciences

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Philosophy – Bachelor of Arts

Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plan

Mission Statement

The mission of the University of Florida as described in the 2012 Undergraduate Catalog (<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/uf-mission/Pages/home.aspx>) encompasses three goals:

- Teaching—undergraduate and graduate through the doctorate—is the fundamental purpose of the university.
- Research and scholarship are integral to the education process and to expanding humankind’s understanding of the natural world, the mind and the senses.
- Service is the university’s obligation to share the benefits of its knowledge for the public good.

UF's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/about/index.html>) describes its "principal mission" as "to lead the academic quest to understand our place in the universe, and to help shape our society and environment" and adds that "[t]hrough teaching, research and service, the College continually expands our knowledge and practice in the most fundamental questions in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural and mathematical sciences."

The UF Department of Philosophy supports these missions through teaching, research and service designed to pursue fundamental questions that arise in many different fields, especially those pursued in CLAS.

The Department pursues the fundamental mission of education by providing courses and programs at every level. It provides service to the larger university community in offering both lower-level and more advanced courses that help provide a broad-based liberal arts education to students across the university; it offers both a major leading to a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a minor degree popular among UF students; and it offers advanced graduate courses leading to both a Master of Arts and a Doctorate in Philosophy.

The faculty of the Department of Philosophy are highly engaged in research activities, advancing the state of inquiry into fundamental questions of a conceptual, epistemological, and ethical character; they participate frequently in national and international venues, often publish with leading academic presses and in influential professional journals, and serve the discipline at large through contributing time to the important practice of refereeing and reviewing for publishers.

The Department also aims to serve the broader community via exposing the benefits of clear and critical thinking about matters of value, knowledge and other controversial issues by doing such things as creating and participating in public events at which philosophical questions are discussed by diverse audiences.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The Academic Learning Compact for Philosophy can be found online here:
<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/philosophy.aspx>.

Content

1. Identify, describe and explain the major questions addressed, the range of answers offered and the methods employed in the history of Western philosophy.
2. Identify, describe and explain the major arguments and options in core areas of contemporary philosophy, such as ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics.
3. Employ the fundamental tools of formal logic, including the propositional and predicate calculus.

Critical Thinking

4. Discern the structure of arguments, to represent them fairly and clearly and to evaluate them for cogency.
5. Formulate their own original arguments, to anticipate objections and to respond in a conscientious fashion.

Communication

6. Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from both historical sources and contemporary works.
7. Speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.

These skills should serve majors well in a variety of post-graduation careers, including graduate education in law, journalism, business, and medicine, as well as careers in public service, editing, publishing, and information management. They are also skills important for citizens of a democratic society to possess.

Curriculum Map

Philosophy B.A.
Key: **I**ntrouced

Reinforced

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Assessed

The major requires 33 credit hours, where 15 must be drawn from the five area distribution requirements (PHH3100, PHH3400, PHI3130, PHI3650, and PHI3300 or PHI3500) and 6 must be drawn from the intensive 4000-level seminars. Specific content knowledge (SLOs 1-3) are introduced and assessed in specific courses, while the critical thinking and communication skills are reinforced throughout and given a special assessment in the 4000-level seminars by means of a "Model Paper". Finally, all students must complete an exit survey to graduate, thereby providing us with their own assessment of what they have learned.

Curriculum	PHH3100	PHH3400	PHI3130	PHI3650	PHI3300 or PHI3500	Two or more 4000- level seminars	Required Exit Survey
SLOs							
Content Knowledge							
SLO #1	IRA Papers and exams	IRA Papers and exams					A
SLO #2				IRA Papers and exams	IRA Papers and exams		A
SLO #3			IA Exams				A
Critical Thinking							
SLO #4	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	A Model Paper	A
SLO #5	IR	IR		IR	IR	A Model Paper	A
Communication							
SLO #6	IR	IR		IR	IR	A Model Paper	A
SLO #7	IR	IR		IR	IR	A Model Paper	A

Assessment Cycle

Philosophy B.A.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Analysis and Interpretation:

August-November

Improvement Actions:

Completed by December

Dissemination:

Completed by January

SLOs	Year	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Content Knowledge							
#1		X	X	X	X	X	X
#2		X	X	X	X	X	X
#3		X	X	X	X	X	X
Critical Thinking							
#4		X	X	X	X	X	X
#5		X	X	X	X	X	X
Communication							
#6		X	X	X	X	X	X
#7		X	X	X	X	X	X

Data relevant to assessment is collected at the end of each semester (fall, spring, summer). The Undergraduate Coordinator arranges such data for review at the beginning of each fall semester, which allows time for the Undergraduate Committee to review that data and present recommendations to the Department as a whole and, if curricular changes are adopted, to make changes in the catalog for the following year. Proposals for changes would be evaluated and adopted by the end of the fall semester (December) and actual implementation and dissemination would start by the spring semester (January).

Recommended changes can include many other practices besides curricular changes; they may include the dissemination of specific teaching strategies that seem more effective or consideration of policies that mandate that certain elements be included in certain courses or the like. They may also focus on some SLOs rather than others, even though all SLOs are evaluated together.

As the number of majors graduating in any given year is usually less than 50, it is difficult to discern any major trends without data encompassing several years. With this in mind, the Department plans a more serious review of the data every three years in addition to the standard review each year.

Methods and Procedures

SLO Assessment Matrix for 2012-3

2012-13 Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method	Measurement Procedure
SLO 1. Identify, describe and explain the major questions addressed, the range of answers offered and the methods employed in the history of Western philosophy.	Papers and exams	Grades or rubric.
SLO 2. Identify, describe and explain the major arguments and options in core areas of contemporary philosophy, such as ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics.	Papers and exams	Grades or rubric.
SLO 3. Employ the fundamental tools of formal logic, including the propositional and predicate calculus.	Exams	Grades
SLO 4. Discern the structure of arguments, to represent them fairly and clearly and to evaluate them for cogency.	Model paper	Evaluated using an official rubric developed by the Department for this express purpose. That rubric was developed and disseminated among the faculty when SLOs 1-7 were first adopted and a copy is distributed at the start of each academic year to all faculty as a reminder.
SLO 5. Formulate their own original arguments, to anticipate objections and to respond in a conscientious fashion.	Model paper	Evaluated using an official rubric developed by the Department for this express purpose. That rubric was developed and disseminated among the faculty when SLOs 1-7 were first adopted and a copy is distributed at the start of each academic year to all faculty as a reminder.
SLO 6. Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from both historical sources and contemporary works.	Model paper	Evaluated using an official rubric developed by the Department for this express purpose. That rubric was developed and disseminated

		among the faculty when SLOs 1-7 were first adopted and a copy is distributed at the start of each academic year to all faculty as a reminder.
SLO 7. Speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.	Model paper	Evaluated using an official rubric developed by the Department for this express purpose. That rubric was developed and disseminated among the faculty when SLOs 1-7 were first adopted and a copy is distributed at the start of each academic year to all faculty as a reminder.

In assessing how well students are doing in any academic program, there are two main options available. The first is to assess *as* they are pursuing the degree; the second is to assess those who have *completed* the degree. We take the second option for two reasons. First, since philosophy is a "found" major (something students typically only pursue after being exposed to it in service and general education classes) there is not a stable body of majors one can track from their first year to their last. Second, given that the program does not require majors to follow a strict sequence of courses, there is no good way to ensure any assessment data is collected prior to a student's completion of the degree. Hence, the method we have adopted focuses on information on the students available at the time they complete their degree.

The extent to which our majors achieve SLOs 1-7 is assessed in three ways:

Direct Assessments

- (1) Completion of requirements for the baccalaureate degree, as determined by faculty.
- (2) Evaluation of a "Model Paper" in a 4000-level philosophy class as earning a "B" or better. This evaluation is done accordance with the department's grading rubric designed specifically for such papers. (please attach a copy of the rubric)

Indirect Assessment

- (3) A mandatory exit survey for graduating majors in which students provide self-reports of their mastery of each SLO as well as their improvement over time on each.

The first measure is straightforward; the standing requirements for the BA in Philosophy are already designed to assess student's achievement of SLOs 1-7.

The second measure makes use of a paper of a special sort: a "Model Paper." A Model Paper is any paper that (a) is written as part of an assignment in a 4000-level class; (b) is argumentative and not just expository in nature; and (c) is substantial in size, on the order of 2000 words or more. Any such paper is evaluated using an official rubric developed by the

Department for this express purpose. That rubric was developed and disseminated among the faculty when SLOs 1-7 were first adopted and a copy is distributed at the start of each academic year to all faculty as a reminder.

The philosophy major requires that each student take at least two courses at the advanced 4000-level. The distinction between 3000- and 4000-level classes is significant; a 4000-level philosophy course is designed to be more of a seminar, with smaller class sizes, more advanced material, and registration limited to students who have already satisfactorily completed a 3000-level philosophy class. In any such seminar, a student will be required to write at least one paper suitable for evaluation as a model paper. Hence, each major will have at least two chances at writing a Model Paper with a grade of B or better.

At the end of each semester, each instructor teaching a 4000-level class reports on which of his or her students has earned a B or better in a Model Paper. Whether a student has accomplished this feat is independent of his or her course grade. Data on all students in those class is collected, even those who are not in fact philosophy majors, since it is possible they might become a major later, in which case we want to have a record of that performance. (The majority of students in 4000-level classes will typically be philosophy majors in any case.) This data is saved over time for ongoing analysis.

The measures in (1) and (2) are direct measures of the SLOs. We plan to institute the indirect measure (3) in the coming years by requiring graduating majors to take an exit survey in which they report on what they see as areas in which they have improved and the degree to which they think they have improved.

In the fall of each academic year, the Undergraduate Coordinator determines the percentage of those who graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy in the previous academic year who also completed a Model Paper with a grade of B or better, as per assessment measure (2). This provides us a measure of how well the program is doing in ensuring that its graduates have in fact achieved the specified learning outcomes. The third measure (the exit survey) will include several different questions and is meant to provide us more fine-grained feedback from the graduates themselves.

While the general system of collecting data about Model Papers was adopted in late 2006, data collection prior to 2008 was not properly managed. Since then, however, the data has been consistently compiled. Given the structure of the assessments, the only meaningful analysis is available for a given graduating class of majors once consistent data-keeping has been in place for a few years prior to that group's semester of graduation. Given our records, we count Spring 2010 as the first semester for which good data is available.

Assessment Oversight

The process of collecting data and providing the basic results (as illustrated in the chart displayed in the previous section) is the job of the Undergraduate Coordinator. The Undergraduate Committee as a whole in conjunction with the Department Chair is responsible for analyzing the data over time and making recommendations to the Department in light of that analysis.

The people named below are the Department Chair and the Undergraduate Coordinator, respectively.

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
Gene Witmer	Philosophy	gwitmer@ufl.edu	273-1830
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Official Grading Rubric for assessing the "Model Paper" used in 4000-level seminars

Department of Philosophy
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Florida
Adopted November 2006

A paper counts as a Model Paper if and only if (i) it is completed during a 4000-level philosophy class (including PHI4905 and PHI4912); (ii) it is argumentative and not just expository in nature; and (iii) it is substantial in size, on the order of at least 2000 words or more (that is, approximately 10 pages or more).

The requirements for receiving a degree in philosophy include taking at least two 4000-level courses. Such courses are considered to be advanced seminars, and as such they provide a suitable vehicle for the production of a Model Paper. Instructors teaching a 4000-level course agree to include as part of the required work at least one paper assignment that should produce such a paper. They also agree to assign a "B" to such a paper only if it meets the conditions spelled out below.

Since a Model Paper is only offered during an advanced 4000-level philosophy seminar, earning a B or better on a Model Paper is considered good evidence that a student has achieved the SLOs for the Philosophy degree.

For a Model Paper to receive a B or better, it must meet *all or nearly all of the following conditions*.

Positive conditions

- The writing is clear throughout, avoiding equivocation, problematic use of jargon, obscurity, or unduly compressed exposition.
- The thesis of the paper is readily identified.
- The paper is organized around the author's main thesis and the argument for that thesis, which argument is not hidden in the text but easily discernible for the careful reader.
- The author provides sufficient guidance to the reader by way of explaining his or her goals, endorsements, and disavowals.
- The author makes a fair effort to identify and respond to objections to or problems with his or her claims.
- The paper manifests an accurate and substantive understanding of the various philosophical theories, questions, or debates under discussion.
- The paper competently assesses the relative strength of various arguments and objections.
- The paper is guided by a sense of which questions are important to the main issue and which are subsidiary questions.

Negative conditions

- The paper does not demonstrate any serious misunderstandings of the material under discussion.
- The paper propounds no obviously unsound arguments.
- The paper is not burdened with obvious "filler" material designed merely to take up space.
- The paper does not contain any lengthy passages during which clarity lapses in a serious fashion.

Formal conditions

- The paper is free of egregious spelling and/or grammatical errors.
- Quotations and sources are provided with appropriate reference information.