

M.A. in Philosophy Academic Assessment Plan

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College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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Office of the Provost

*University of
Florida*

*Institutional
Assessment*

*Continuous Quality
Enhancement*

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Academic Assessment Plan for M.A. in Philosophy

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

A. Mission

The mission of the University of Florida 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.

(<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/uf-mission/Pages/home.aspx>)

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.

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

| SLO Type | SLO | Assessment Method |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Knowledge | 1. Identify, describe and explain key aspects of ancient Greek philosophy, the modern era (1600-1900), and core areas of contemporary philosophy. | Final Examination (oral examination by committee) assessed as either <i>unsatisfactory</i> , <i>satisfactory</i> , <i>good</i> , or <i>outstanding</i> . |
| Skills | 2. Employ and understand the tools of contemporary formal logic, including first-order predicate calculus and a substantial portion of meta-logical theory. | Final Exam in Graduate Logic (written) assessed using Departmental Rubric as either <i>unsatisfactory</i> , <i>satisfactory</i> , <i>good</i> , or <i>outstanding</i> . |
| Skills | 3. Read and comprehend contemporary philosophical work, present such work to others, analyze and critically evaluate the arguments therein, and formulate one's own position clearly and defend it in the context of philosophical discussion. | Final Proseminar Paper assessed using Departmental Rubric as either <i>unsatisfactory</i> , <i>satisfactory</i> , <i>good</i> , or <i>outstanding</i> . |
| Professional Behavior | 4. Present philosophical material in a lucid and concise fashion to audiences of varying backgrounds, lead discussions of philosophical material in a way that encourages clear and original thinking about the issues, and assess undergraduate work in philosophy classes, including grading written work for clarity of expression, comprehension of material, and cogency of argument. | Supervisor Assessment of Teaching Assistant work for each semester employed as such, using Departmental TA Assessment Form and assessed as either <i>unsatisfactory</i> , <i>satisfactory</i> , <i>good</i> , or <i>outstanding</i> . |

C. Research

The M.A. degree is not primarily a research degree but does put students in a position that should enable them to pursue serious research in a Ph.D. program in Philosophy. Any 6000-level courses students take in the course of completing the M.A. requirements would involve significant research, however, and it is likely that M.A. students will take a few of those in their time in the program. In such courses, students are required to produce more independent work, typically a sustained research paper of the sort that emulates published papers in philosophy. Graduate students at all levels are also encouraged and supported in other research-related activities, such as presenting papers at conference venues, both those aimed at graduate students specifically and standard professional conferences.

D. Assessment Timeline

Program: M.A. in Philosophy

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

| Assessment SLOs | Assessment | Time of assessment |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Knowledge | | |
| #1 | Final Oral Examination | Final semester |
| Skills | | |
| #2 | Final Exam in Graduate Logic course | Completion of Graduate Logic course |
| #3 | Final Paper in Graduate Proseminar | Completion of Graduate Proseminar course |
| Professional Behavior | | |
| #4 | Supervisor Assessment of Teaching Assistant work | End of each semester during which student is a Teaching Assistant |

E. Assessment Cycle

Program: M.A. in Philosophy

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Analysis and Interpretation:
Program Modifications:
Dissemination:

August-November
Completed by December
Completed by January

| SLOs | Year | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 | 15-16 |
|------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Content Knowledge | | | | | | | |
| #1 | | | | X | X | X | X |
| Skills | | | | | | | |
| #3 | | | | X | X | X | X |
| #4 | | | | X | X | X | X |
| Professional Behavior | | | | | | | |
| #5 | | | | X | X | X | X |

F. Measurement Tools

The first SLO, which specifies the overall knowledge to be gained by students in the M.A., is assessed by means of the Final Examination for the degree. This is an oral examination by committee, taken in the student's last semester. The committee consists either of the Graduate Committee or its representatives and has typically three members. The examination uses questions that fit into a list of topics drawn from those courses other than Graduate Logic and Proseminar that are named as satisfying Basic and Additional Distribution Requirements,

namely: Ancient Philosophy I, Ancient Philosophy II, Modern Philosophy I, Modern Philosophy II, Epistemology, Foundations of Analytic Philosophy, and Ethical Theory. Each student's performance is assessed by the examining committee as either *unsatisfactory*, *satisfactory*, *good*, or *outstanding*.

The second and third SLOs describe foundational skills for academic work in philosophy. Such skills are tested in nearly every aspect of the program, but two specific requirements provide standardized assessments. The skills in logic are assessed by means of a comprehensive final exam conducted at the end of the required course in Graduate Logic (PHI5135). The skills in comprehension, presentation, and argumentative rigor are assessed by means of the Final Paper written for the Graduate Proseminar (PHI5935) required for all graduate students. In each case, a specific rubric is used to assess the exam or paper as either *unsatisfactory*, *satisfactory*, *good*, or *outstanding*.

The fourth SLO assesses teaching skills, as nearly every MA student will work as a Teaching Assistant quite frequently, and typically every fall and spring semester. The Department uses a standardized form for assessing the work of a Teaching Assistant when the TA works as a discussion leader. (A distinct form is used for assessing those students who have control over their own class.) These forms ask about the student's handling of discussion, grading, office hours, and his or her reliability as a TA. At the end of the semester the supervising instructor provides these assessments to the student and they are on file with the Graduate Coordinator. Data in the aggregate can then be reviewed over time

G. Assessment Oversight

| Name | Department Affiliation | Email Address | Phone Number |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Gene Witmer (Chair) | Philosophy | gwitmer@ufl.edu | 273-1830 |
| Chuang Liu (Graduate Coordinator) | Philosophy | logics@ufl.edu | 273-1811 |

Appendix A. Final Proseminar Paper Rubric – M.A. in Philosophy

Each MA student must complete the Graduate Proseminar (PHI5935), which requires a substantial paper assessed by means of the following rubric as either *unsatisfactory*, *satisfactory*, *good*, or *outstanding*. Each listed condition is necessary for being counted as belonging to the indicated category. If there is at least one condition in the "satisfactory" column that a paper fails to meet, that paper is unsatisfactory.

| Factor/Assessment | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
|---------------------|--|--|---|
| Formal | | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no egregious spelling or grammatical errors. 2. Citation is appropriate, including both quoted material and ideas to which reference is made. |
| Clarity & structure | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are few if any points at which the expert reader needs to puzzle over how to understand the point being made. 2. The paper has been "trimmed" of excess material so that its overall structure is easy to discern. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no lengthy passages with serious lapses in clarity. 2. Any non-standard jargon or jargon with varying use is explained. 3. The thesis is readily identified and appears early in the paper. 4. The organization of the paper makes the thesis and its defense central. 5. The author makes clear his or her goals, endorsements, and disavowals. |
| Content & argument | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The paper presents a substantially novel argument or position and its defense is rigorous throughout. 2. The novelty and rigor is sufficient to make the paper suitable for presentation at a professional conference. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The paper manifests a good sense of which issues are central and which subsidiary to the main questions. 2. The central arguments have significant probative strength. 3. Anticipated objections and questions cover most of those that an expert reader will think of on first read. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no serious misunderstandings of the material under discussion. 2. The author makes a fair effort to identify and respond to objections to or problems with his or her claims. 3. The paper competently assesses the relative strength of various arguments and objections. |