

Assessment Activity Report Due June 2nd, 2016
to the Office of Academic Planning, ADM 450

Assessment Findings template

** Please see resources at the [Academic Planning website](#)

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Please list your program learning goals.

LEARNING GOALS FOR ALL THREE PHIL DEGREE PROGRAMS ARE ATTACHED.

Which program goal did you choose to assess this semester?

UNDERGRADUATE: OUR LEARNING GOALS ARE FORMULATED IN TERMS OF DEMONSTRATIONS OF ACQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

WE ASSESS STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELEVANT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE, AS EVIDENCED BY SPECIFIED WRITTEN PRODUCTS PRESENTED AS A PORTFOLIO. WE ASSESS EACH WRITTEN PRODUCT IN RELATION TO OUR LEARNING OUTCOMES, APPLYING A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED RUBRIC. THE NATURE OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES IS SUCH THAT WE CANNOT READILY DISAGGREGATE THEM.

THEREFORE, THE ANSWER FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS IS "WE ASSESSED ALL OF THEM".

GRADUATE: THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IS STRUCTURED BY A SERIES OF PROGRESSIVELY MORE SOPHISTICATED BENCHMARK DEMONSTRATIONS OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE. IN AY '15/'16 OUR ASSESSMENT FOCUSED ON THE EARLIEST OF THESE BENCHMARKS, OUR WRITTEN THREE HOUR "COMP" EXAM.

THIS EXAM, WHICH IS PRECEDED BY WORKSHOPS AND PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT STUDY GROUPS, ASSESSES THE GRADUATE PROGRAM OUTCOMES (SEE ATTACHED LIST): **1,2,5,7,8 THIS IS THE ANSWER FOR THE GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM.**

How was the assessment completed? What evidence did the faculty consider (e.g. written papers, presentations, portfolios)?

UNDERGRADUATE: STUDENTS IN THEIR SENIOR YEAR MUST CREATE A PORTFOLIO CONTAINING A SELECTION OF THEIR PAPERS FROM BOTH EARLY AND RECENT PHILOSOPHY COURSES.

THEN THEY ADD A REFLECTIVE ESSAY DISCUSSING THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT (WHAT THEY LEARNED, WHEN AND HOW, WHAT THEY STILL NEED TO LEARN, WHAT AREAS/FIGURES/SCHOOLS/PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS THEY ARE SPECIALIZING IN AND WHY, ETC. AND HOW THEIR EDUCATION MIGHT HAVE BEEN IMPROVED).

THIS ESSAY SERVES AS A KIND OF CULMINATING DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR ACQUISITION OF THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT AWARD OF OUR DEGREE AFFIRMS THE STUDENT TO POSSESS.

WE HAVE AN APPROVED RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING THE COLLECTION OF ESSAYS THE PORTFOLIO CONTAINS.

IN AY '15/'16 WE HAD **55 UNDERGRADUATE PORTFOLIOS** FOR ASSESSMENT.

GRADUATE: STUDENTS SIT A 3 HOUR, CLOSED BOOK EXAM ON FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS AND ISSUES. (PLEASE REFER TO THE ATTACHED LIST TO IDENTIFY THE LEARNING OUTCOMES THIS EXAM ASSESSES).

THE EXAM IS PRECEDED BY A SEMESTER-LONG SET OF WORKSHOPS AND STUDY GROUPS DURING WHICH STUDENTS PRACTICE THE LISTED SKILLS, ASSISTING AND CRITIQUING EACH OTHER WITH SUPERVISION FROM HALF THE GRADUATE FACULTY (EACH GRADUATE FACULTY MEMBER PARTICIPATES AT LEAST ONCE ANNUALLY.)

EACH SEMESTER THE CHAIR, ONE OF THE GRADUATE COORDINATORS, AND HALF OF THE REMAINING GRADUATE FACULTY ASSESSES THE EXAMS ACCORDING TO APPROVED RUBRICS AND THEN ALL CONVERSE ABOUT THE RESULTS. MEMBERS MAY BRING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM CHANGES TO THE DEPARTMENT. THESE CHANGES TEND TO ADDRESS ADVISING, AS MOST OF OUR STUDENTS ARE SO WELL PREPARED BY THE SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP CURRICULUM THAT THEY PASS THE EXAM. (ONLY TWO ATTEMPTS TO PASS THE EXAM ARE PERMITTED, EXCEPT IN EXTRAORDINARY CASES ARISING FROM SITUATIONS BEYOND THE STUDENT'S CONTROL)

IN AY '15/'16 WE HAD **32 COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS** FOR ASSESSMENT. PLEASE REFER TO THE ATTACHED CHART TO COMPARE RESULTS FOR AY '13'14, '14'15, '15'16.

What did you find? Is the learning goal being met? Will you work on steps to take to improve the student learning outcomes based on these findings (e.g. create signature assignments, change the required courses)?

UNDERGRADUATE: WE FOUND THAT THE STANDARDS FOR AWARD OF THE BACCALAUREATE DEGREE ARE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY BEING MET. THOSE FEW STUDENTS WHOSE PORTFOLIOS SHOW DISABLING DEFICIENCIES TURN OUT ALSO TO LACK ACADEMIC RECORDS SUFFICIENT FOR GRADUATION.

IN GENERAL, STUDENTS' DEMONSTRATED MASTERY OF REQUISITE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE (OR DEFICIENCIES IN MASTERY) IN THEIR PORTFOLIOS (INCLUDING THEIR REFLECTIVE ESSAY) ALIGNS WELL WITH THE GRADES THEY HAVE EARNED IN THEIR CLASSES.

REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPTS INDICATES THAT STUDENTS WHO DO LESS WELL OFTEN HAVE NOT TAKEN OUR GVAR PORTAL COURSE IN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF THEIR JUNIOR YEAR. THEY THEREFORE GET OFF TO A LESS GOOD START IN THEIR FIRST SEMESTER JUNIOR PHILOSOPHY COURSES.

WE HAVE INTERVIEWED AN INFORMALLY SELECTED SUBSET OF THESE STUDENTS (ALL WERE JUNIOR TRANSFER) AS TO WHY THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT IS DELAYED. THE REASON THEY MOST OFTEN OFFER IS THAT THEY MUST TAKE SOPHOMORE COMPOSITION BEFORE ENROLLING IN THE PHIL GVAR COURSE THAT TEACHES THEM HOW TO EXECUTE PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING.

OUR FACULTY HAS DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM. THE EVIDENCE IS THAT PHIL 320 IS EFFECTIVE BOTH AS A GVAR COURSE AND AS A PORTAL TO THE MAJORS. WE THEREFORE DO NOT SEE ANY REASON FOR ALTERING THE PROGRAM BUT WE MUST ENSURE THAT STUDENTS CAN TAKE PHIL 320 AT THE START OF THEIR UPPER DIVISION WORK.

TO ATTEMPT TO HELP MORE STUDENTS GET INTO PHIL 320 IN THEIR FIRST SEMESTER AFTER TRANSFER, WE PROPOSED TO DEAN JENNIFER SUMMIT THAT A NEW CATEGORY – THAT OF “CO-REQUISITE” – BE CREATED AND TRANSFER STUDENTS BE PERMITTED TO TAKE SOPHOMORE COMPOSITION AND GVAR COURSES IN THE SAME SEMESTER IF THE DEPARTMENT OFFERING THE GVAR COURSE SO REQUESTS. WE CONTINUE TO AWAIT A RESPONSE TO THIS PROPOSAL.

GRADUATE: OVER THE PAST DECADE WE EXECUTED SOME IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THE MA PROGRAM, AND THEY HAVE PROVEN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL. IN GENERAL, STUDENTS ARE PERFORMING VERY WELL INDEED.

AFTER THE EXAMS ARE GRADED, WE DISCUSS EACH FAILURE AT LENGTH, DIAGNOSE THE CAUSE(S) OF THE FAILURE, AND THEN AS A GROUP TAILOR A SUBSTANTIAL PLAN FOR THE STUDENT TO FOLLOW IN ORDER TO PASS AT THE SECOND TRY. IN MOST CASES THESE PLANS WORK! SEE ATTACHED CHART FOR BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF SUCH PLANS.

What assessment activities do you plan to undertake next academic year? Are there other assessment findings that you'd like to address? In light of your assessment work, changes in the field, or other influences, do you want to take the opportunity to revise the program goals next year? Will you move on to assess a different learning goal?

IN REGARD TO **THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**, THIS DECISION WILL BE MADE AT OUR FIRST FALL DEPT MEETING. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS.

IN REGARD TO **THE GRADUATE PROGRAM**, WE MAY ASSESS SYSTEMATIC EVIDENCE FROM A DIFFERENT PROGRAM BENCHMARK – SPECIFICALLY, ONE OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

I. B.A. PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. ____ Gain knowledge of the history or current state of the discipline of philosophy
2. ____ Develop a grasp of representative philosophical issues and ways of dealing with them
3. ____ Develop a capacity to apply philosophical methods to intellectual problems
4. ____ Develop a sense of how philosophy bears on other disciplines
5. ____ Develop a sense of how philosophy bears on human life more generally
6. ____ Develop a critical mind
7. ____ Develop analytic skills
8. ____ Develop interpretive skills
9. ____ Apply philosophical conventions and tools

II. B.A. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. ____ Gain knowledge of the philosophical issues that arise in the seminal texts of the major world religions
2. ____ Develop an understanding of the issues and problems that arise at the intersections of philosophy and religion
3. ____ Develop a capacity to apply philosophical methods to religious ideas
4. ____ Develop a sense of how philosophy bears on other disciplines in which religion is studied
5. ____ Develop a sense of how philosophy bears on religious life more generally
6. ____ Develop a critical mind
7. ____ Develop analytic skills
8. ____ Develop interpretive skills
9. ____ Develop a capacity for the imaginative development of abstract formulations and their concrete applications

III. M.A. PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. ____ Demonstrate advanced knowledge of the history and current state of the discipline of philosophy
2. ____ Demonstrate a sophisticated grasp of representative philosophical issues and ways of dealing with them
3. ____ Demonstrate a mature capacity to apply philosophical methods to intellectual problems and to engage in philosophical discussions meeting the standards of the discipline
4. ____ Apply advanced analytic skills
5. ____ Apply advanced interpretive skills
6. ____ Demonstrate mastery of the imaginative development of abstract formulations and their concrete applications
7. ____ Develop the philosophical skills and knowledge necessary to do graduate work at the Ph.D. level
8. ____ Develop the philosophical skills and knowledge necessary to teach philosophy at the community college (lower-division) level
9. ____ Demonstrate the capacity to study philosophy beyond the undergraduate level for the purposes of self-enrichment or to acquire additional expertise related to their professions

TABLE 2: INDIVIDUAL PHIL 896 EXAM RESULTS

	TOOK EXAM	PASSED	NOT PASSED AND ACTION
Fall 2013	15	14	M.L., the student who failed, was advised regarding his writing. He re-took 896 the next semester, Spring 2014, and passed. This student has since completed his MA degree.
Spring 2014	19	18	A.P., the student who failed, had been experiencing a personal crisis during the semester. She was advised to take additional seminars and wait a year before retaking the exam. In Spring 2015, she passed the exam.
Fall 14	14	13	M.C., the student who failed, has been suffering from various illnesses and, after meeting with the Graduate Coordinator, realizes that she also qualifies for DPRC. She was scheduled to take the exam through the DPRC in Spring 2015, but withdrew due to medical reasons. She still needs to pass 896 exam and write her thesis.
Spring 15	11	11	N/A
Fall 15	19	16	J.R., one student who failed, took the exam again in Spring 16 and passed. J.W. experienced an employment crisis shortly before the exam that prevented her from adequately preparing for it. She plans to take the course again in Fall 2016, but because she had withdrawn from the course previously (having missed the drop deadline), will need to petition to register for the course a third time. We plan to support that petition. W.C., the third student who failed, is an English-as-second-language speaker. He is currently taking additional courses in order to work on his writing.
Spring 16	13	12	M.B., the student who failed, had (for the first time while at SFSU) taken on a full-time job and commuted from LA while taking two graduate courses. Three members of the committee met with him in person and advised him about the following: the pitfalls of overscheduling; the importance of carefully reading the exam questions and responding to entire questions; that he should take a refresher course on Hume and Kant, preferably one that goes deeply into the standard issues in these figures.
Total	91	92%	