

**UNIT EFFECTIVENESS PROCESS
PHASE 1 – ASSESSMENT PLAN for STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
2006-2007**

Unit Name: Department of Philosophy and Humanities

Degree Program (For Academic Instructional Units)
Please use a separate Form B for each degree program
B.A., Philosophy

Student Competencies (Statements of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors that program majors should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the degree program.)

Upon completion of their degrees, philosophy majors will be able to

- 1 Construct, and critically assess, complex philosophical arguments.**
- 2 Demonstrate an understanding of the central figures and main problems in the history of philosophy, together with an understanding of the central figures and main problems in several of the “systematic” areas of philosophy — such as, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, etc.**
- 3 Display knowledge of philosophical methods of analysis.**
- 4 Read a philosophical text with care and comprehension.**
- 5 Write clear, effective, and thoughtful philosophical prose.**
- 6 Demonstrate proficiency in discipline-specific computer skills deemed necessary to completing successfully the philosophy degree.**

Intended Outcome 1

Philosophy majors completing the 3000- and 4000-level undergraduate courses in philosophy will have mastered the fundamentals of good philosophical writing—thus being able to produce written work displaying both appropriate stylistic form and adequate philosophical content.

Related Student Competency (If intended outcome is derived from student competency)

Competency 5.

Action Steps to Achieve Intended Outcome

The Chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will encourage faculty to bring to their students' attention some of the various resources available to the student philosophy writer, including those on the Web. The Department chair will remind the undergraduate advisor to advise

philosophy majors to take PHIL 3307, the seminar in research methods and philosophical writing, early enough in their undergraduate careers.

Assessment Methodology

Include the following:

- *full description of the planned assessment activity*
- *the criteria for success*
- *the timetable for assessment activity*
- *responsible persons (by job title, not name) and specific duty*

An assessment panel of philosophy faculty in the department will score the term papers or other written work of the students taking the 3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses. Copies of student work completed in these courses during the 2006-2007 academic year will be collected by the instructors and presented to the assessment panel for its evaluation. Panel members will rate each piece of work along a number of dimensions (clarity, organization, depth of evaluation...) using a uniform rating scale. An overall performance rating for each piece of work will then be calculated and recorded; average student performance ratings on each of the component dimensions will also be calculated. A successful outcome will be 80% of the philosophy majors who complete the 3000- and 4000-level courses in philosophy receiving an overall score of at least '3' (on a five-point scale) on the papers and other written assignments that they turn in for these courses, as determined by the assessment panel. The chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will be responsible for analyzing the assessment data generated by this outcome.

Intended Outcome 2

Philosophy majors completing the PHIL 3301-3304 "History of Philosophy" courses will demonstrate an understanding of the central figures and main problems of the relevant period in the history of philosophy.

Related Student Competency (If intended outcome is derived from student competency)

Competency 2

Action Steps to Achieve Intended Outcome

The Chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will encourage philosophy faculty teaching the history-of-philosophy series courses to review the competencies that philosophy students are to acquire and make sure that historical information relevant to those competencies—including information on central figures and main problems—is being taught in those courses, where possible.

Assessment Methodology

Include the following:

- *full description of the planned assessment activity*
- *the criteria for success*
- *the timetable for assessment activity*
- *responsible persons (by job title, not name) and specific duty*

This assessment will make use of "embedded" questions, during the 2006-2007 academic year. A successful outcome will be 80% of the philosophy majors who complete a course in the PHIL 3301 to 3304 course series demonstrating an "adequate" understanding of a majority of the positions of the central philosophical figures and of the central philosophical problems of that historical period, when answering the relevant "embedded" questions on the exams for those courses. For essay or short-answer embedded questions, adequate performance will be defined as a '3' or better on a five-point scale used to score the questions; for "objective" (e.g., multiple-choice or true-false) questions, adequate performance will simply be a correct answer. The chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will be responsible for analyzing the assessment data generated by this outcome.

Intended Outcome 3

Philosophy majors taking the 3000- and 4000-level philosophy courses for which a term paper is required will display proficiency in the use of discipline-specific database skills on a computer.

Related Student Competency (If intended outcome is derived from student competency)

Competency 6

Action Steps to Achieve Intended Outcome

Faculty teaching these courses who require that students make use of outside sources in writing their term papers will also require that each student hand in, along with their papers, the first page of a bibliographic search using the *Philosopher's Index* online database. Each semester the Department will sponsor a demonstration of the *Philosopher's Index* database in one of the classrooms in the Central Library.

Assessment Methodology

Include the following:

- *full description of the planned assessment activity*
- *the criteria for success*
- *the timetable for assessment activity*
- *responsible persons (by job title, not name) and specific duty*

This assessment will occur during the 2006-2007 academic year. A successful outcome will be 80% of philosophy majors who are in the 3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses turning in the first page of a successful *Philosopher's Index* search—that is, a search which is "successful" relative to the topics of their papers for which they were searching for sources, whether or not the correct search procedure yielded any sources on their respective topics. The chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will be responsible for analyzing the assessment data generated by this outcome.

Intended Outcome 4

Philosophy majors completing the 3000- and 4000-level philosophy courses will demonstrate the ability to construct and assess a complex philosophical argument.

Related Student Competency (If intended outcome is derived from student competency)

Competency 1

Action Steps to Achieve Intended Outcome

The Chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will encourage philosophy faculty teaching the 3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses to review the competencies that philosophy students are to acquire and make sure that the skill sets relevant to those competencies—including the ability to construct and critically assess complex philosophical arguments—are being taught/modeled in those courses, where possible.

Assessment Methodology

Include the following:

- *full description of the planned assessment activity*
- *the criteria for success*
- *the timetable for assessment activity*
- *responsible persons (by job title, not name) and specific duty*

During the 2006-2007 academic year, student work for these courses will be scored by the instructor using an assessment instrument that allows the instructor to rate the relevant items of student work along a number of dimensions (understanding of argument, appropriate level of complexity, formal correctness,...) using a uniform rating scale. An overall performance rating for each piece of work will then be calculated and recorded; average student performance ratings on each of the component dimensions will also be calculated. A successful outcome will be 80% of the philosophy majors who complete the 3000- and 4000-level courses in philosophy receiving an overall score of at least '3' (on a five-point scale) on the assessed written work for these courses. The chair of the Departmental Planning Committee will be responsible for analyzing the assessment data generated by this outcome.