

**Undergraduate Assessment of Student Learning Report  
Report for Academic Year: 2018-2019**

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**A. Program Information**

Department: Philosophy

Program: Philosophy

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Program assessment website:

[http://www.k-state.edu/philos/future\\_students/assessment.html](http://www.k-state.edu/philos/future_students/assessment.html)

**B. Outcome Reporting**

**Include the following information for each outcome assessed this year:**

**Student Learning Outcome**

We assessed 5 SLOs in AY 18-19:

SLO 1: Students should be able to analyze philosophical arguments using informal methods to differentiate valid arguments, invalid arguments, and arguments that, while valid, rely on contentious premises.

SLO 2: Students should be able to use semantic methods to assess the validity of arguments in sentential logic, and should be able to construct derivations in first order logic.

SLO 3: Students should be able to compose extended philosophical essays in clear prose that meet professional ethical standards of charity, open-mindedness, avoidance of ad hominem attacks, and proper citation of other's ideas.

SLO 4: Students should be able to describe and apply a range of important philosophical theories in epistemology metaphysics, ethics, social and political philosophy and decision theory.

SLO 5: Students should be able to verbally debate philosophical theories, defending and critiquing alternatives in a manner that meets professional ethical standards of charity, open-mindedness, avoidance of ad hominem attacks, and proper credit given to others' ideas.

**Assessment Method(s)**

Describe the assessment tools, measures, instruments, and/or forms of evidence utilized to demonstrate students' achievement of the learning outcomes. Provide information on who is assessed (what course(s) and students) and expected levels of student performance (minimum expected level, proficient level, etc.).

A total of 145 student-assessments were conducted over 5 SLOs.

SLO 1 was assessed by direct measures using multiple instruments in two class (Philo 335, Philo 345), and in two classes (Philo 301, Philo 330) by a single direct measure; instruments included essay prompts and evaluative multiple choice questions. A total of 70 students were assessed; in total assessments employed 15 instruments.

SLO 2 was assessed by direct measures in one class using a multi-question quiz (Philo 320). A total of 16 students were assessed; in total assessments employed 6 instruments.

SLO 3 was assessed by direct measures using multiple writing assignments in one class (Philo 303) and in a second class (Philo340) using a single writing assignment. A total of 37 students were assessed; in total, assessments employed 5 instruments.

SLO 4 was assessed by direct measures in five classes (Philo 301, Philo 305, Philo 330, Philo 340 and Philo 345) using multi-question quizzes with true/false, multiple choice and open-ended essay questions. A total of 114 students were assessed; in total, assessments employed 19 instruments.

SLO 5 was assessed by direct measures in four classes (Philo 330, Philo 335, Philo 340, and Philo 345) by observation of class presentations. A total of 86 students were assessed; in total, assessments employed 7 instruments.

Philo 301, 303, 305, 320, 330, 335, 340 and 345 are all required core courses for majors. No indirect measures were used, because we judge sample sizes too low for reliable inference.

We have Program and Class specific objectives. We aim to ensure that our students have mastered the skills relevant to each SLO, and that as many as possible show truly excellent abilities. We judge a student to have mastered an SLO if his or her average score across all measures of the skills associated with the SLO is at least 75%; we judge the student to have demonstrated excellence if that average is at least 90%. Class Specific Objectives: we aim for each class to contribute to student success, and judge this by class-specific performance on relevant SLOs. Specifically, we want a) the mean score over all measures of an SLO, in each class, to be at least 75%, and b) we desire that 90% of the students in a class demonstrate mastery of the SLOs measured in that class. Program Specific Objectives: for each SLO, we want mean student performance to be at least 75%, with at least 90% of our students exhibiting mastery and 30% of our students exhibiting excellence. Examples of direct measures can be found at <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/plans/measures/direct.htm>.

## Results AY18-19

**Table 1: Average of Student Performance by Class and SLO**

Classes	SLO				
	1	2	3	4	5
301	90%			87%	
303			90%		
305				91%	
320		88%			
330	91%			97%	94%
335	90%			92%	91%
340			94%	96%	99%
345	91%			86%	88%

**Table 2: Class Performance by Achievement (Excellence) and SLO**

Classes	SLO				
	1	2	3	4	5
301	50%			44%	
303			66%		
305				63%	
320		31%			
330	68%			82%	91%
335	76%			78%	100%
340			86%	95%	95%
345	69%			64%	71%

## Class Performance by Achievement (Mastery) and SLO

Classes	SLO				
	1	2	3	4	5
301	78%			94%	
303			100%		
305				89%	
320		88%			
330	95%			95%	95%
335	90%			93%	100%
340			86%	95%	100%
345	95%			86%	93%
<b>Program Performance</b>	<b>SLO 1</b>	<b>SLO 2</b>	<b>SLO 3</b>	<b>SLO 4</b>	<b>SLO 5</b>
<b>Grand Average</b>	90%	88%	92%	92%	92%
<b>Excellence</b>	69%	31%	78%	75%	80%
<b>Mastery</b>	91%	88%	92%	93%	96%

Our SLO's were revised three years ago; longitudinal data are now available for two year-over-year comparisons.

**Program Specific Objectives:** Average scores in all SLOs were well above 75%. Further, students exhibited acceptable levels of excellence (above 30%) with respect to all SLOs. However, fewer than 90% of students exhibited mastery in respect of SLO 2. We note that the difference between actual performance and expected benchmark was small, and this SLO was assessed in only one class, on 16 students, only two of whom failed to reach mastery.

**Year-on-year comparison for program specific objectives:** Overall average scores were comparable between AY18-19 and AY17-18. We saw a stable to modestly increased average scores, and considerable improvement in mastery with respect to SLOs 1, 4 and 5, with only small declines for SLOs 2 and 3. Overall excellence reached a 3 year high, at 72.9%, with SLO-specific excellence rates showing considerable improvement for SLOs 1, 3, 4 and 5, while falling only modestly with respect to SLO 2.

**Class Specific Objectives:** SLO averages were at or above benchmark objectives for each SLO in each class. SLO rates of excellence were at or above benchmark objectives for each SLO in each class. SLO rates of mastery were at or above benchmark objectives for each SLO in each class, excepting rates of mastery for SLO 1 in Philo 301, for SLO 2 in Philo 320, and for SLO 4 in Philo 305 and 345. In all cases except the first, achieved scores were within 5% of the objective.

**Year-on-year comparison for class specific objectives:** Excepting SLO 1 in Philo 301, the rates at which class objectives were met either showed minimal difference between AY17-18 and AY18-19, or showed improvement.

## C. Program Self Review

### **Faculty Review of Annual Assessment Data and Process**

Inspection of the course-specific measures for mastery in AY17-18 suggested that when fewer than 5 instruments are used in a given class, variance in scores is relatively high. We have in the past employed 3 instruments in each class, whenever possible, this being the minimal number of measured variables required to estimate an unmeasured common cause. However, in that circumstance, a student missing just one of three true/false or multiple choice questions will be recorded as having failed to demonstrate mastery. In relatively small sample sizes, this individual level variance in performance will generate

variance in the class- and program-specific measures. Hence, in this year's assessment meeting, instructors were asked to expand the number of instruments used in each section, especially for those instruments recorded with binary (1/0) scores. This change corroborated our judgment that those numbers below benchmark from the AY17-18 year were likely do to sampling error. The one exception is the class specific rate of mastery with respect to SLO 1 in Philo 301. Because the rate of excellence in that class remains quite high (50%, markedly above the benchmark expectation of 30%), we suspect instrument design rather than pedagogy is at issue, and discussion this year has focused on correcting those instruments.

### **Program Improvements**

SLO averages were improved across the board, being stable only for SLO 2. Mastery rates were considerably improved for SLOs 4 and 5. Rates of excellence reached an all-time high, falling only with respect to SLO 2, and otherwise increasing across the board. We judge the shortfall in SLO 2 mastery rates to be a matter of sampling error, but year-on-year comparisons with the next round of assessment data will be used to test that judgement.

### **Future Plans**

We will over then next year increase the number of instruments used to assess outcomes, decreasing the variance in student, class and program specific data.

### **Summary of this Report**

In AY 2018-19, the Philosophy Department continued implementation of a new, shorter, set of SLOs. These SLOs are both more clearly aligned with our new curriculum, and permit a shorter cycle time between assessment outcomes and revisions to program goals or instructional methods. We assessed all five of our new SLOs. We achieved programmatic benchmark goals with respect to percentage of students exhibiting excellence and average score in all five of our SLOs; we achieved benchmark goals with respect to the percentage of students exhibiting mastery in two of our five SLOs (SLOs 4 and 5), fell marginally short in three (SLOs 1, 2 and 3). Of these last, the performance with respect to SLO 1 was in fact an improvement, and all three deviations are non-significant. Course specific data suggest modifications to instruments employed for one SLO in one class. Changes will be developed in the coming year.