**Philosophy Department**

**Annual Assessment Report for 2021-2022 AY**

Department/Program: Philosophy Degree: BA (3 options)

Assessment Coordinator: Carolyn Cusick

1. Please list the learning outcomes you assessed this year.

* LO 2.a. Students should understand basic logic and employ it to reconstruct, criticize, and evaluate arguments
* LO 3.a. Students should be able to identify and apply critical thinking
* LO 4.d. Students should be able to describe the flaws of using simplistic, monological reductionist or relativistic arguments in their communications

1. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment? **Please describe the assignment and the criteria or rubric used to evaluate the assignment in detail and, if possible, include copies of the assignment and criteria/rubric at the end of this report.**

In the weeks leading up to the assignment, students needed to find real-world examples of generalizations, share them with the class, and engage in online discussion evaluating the quality of the generalizations according to the criteria in the textbook in the section on inductive reasoning. Then for the final product they needed to write a memo to someone who might fall prey to a real-world defective generalization to offer relevant advice. We assessed that memo. It required students to 1) demonstrate knowledge of the concept of generalization, 2) find an instance in the world, 3) schematize it, and 4) communicate it to others for whom it should be useful.

Faculty participating in the assessment activity examined 30 memos from one section of Phil 25 in the Spring ’22 semester, considering how each demonstrated the above three learning outcomes, whether each assignment was poor, adequate, or good. And faculty were asked to note any general observations, patterns, or questions that arose while assessing the whole set.

1. What did you learn from your analysis of the data? Please include sample size (how many students were evaluated) and indicate how many students (number or percentage instead of a median or mean) were designated as proficient. Also indicate your benchmark (e.g. 80% of students will be designated as proficient or higher) and indicate the number of students who met that benchmark.

Phil 25 is a lower division course in critical thinking and logic. Students tend to do either very well or very poorly with little in between. So, we expected that 70% (21 students) would rate as good while 30% (9 students) would rate as poor. Faculty were a bit lackadaisical in their bookkeeping, but we engaged in very meaningful discussion. We found that more students than expected did a poor or barely adequate job, though the 20-30% or so who were good were very good.

Discussion did note that the quality of the assignment meant that even the students whose work wasn’t all that good still were actually getting something out of having to do the work. They did all succeed at identifying real world generalizations and having at least some commentary on them. They were not consistently good at schematizing the generalization, and they were often stressing things that weren’t important while ignoring better possible analysis in the quality of the generalizations.

We were overall impressed by the range of topics covered across the assignments. When students turned to the real world to find examples, they located them in serious things about war and health, everything things in sports and art, and things in their own academic lives using classroom and university data. There was almost zero repetition of topics across students. Given that prior to writing these memos, the students shared the generalizations in discussions, this fact alone suggests strong possibilities of meaningful learning.

A small but noticeable number of students did engage with counter-arguments in their memos. A larger number acknowledged the reality that counterarguments are a thing. A few students named fallacies. A few used analogies to make their arguments. All of that signals meaningful learning.

1. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?

Our sense of things is that in Spring 22, and even more so now, students don’t have a lot of energy for PHIL 25. Too many of them go to critical thinking websites rather than finding better sources for arguments. They think that’s the easier route, though it isn’t and doesn’t result in better assignments. So, faculty discussed how to better assist students in finding good sources. We shared various techniques we use in our classes. We considered possible ways to better use the library (or make the library work for us). We’re hoping to look into what happens to old copies of newspapers and other things in print – whether we could keep things that are current but not the latest edition of some periodicals, keep them in the department conference room and encourage students to use them. Or to discuss with librarians better ways for the library website to share online versions of contemporary news that make browsing easier, rather than only searching for things using keywords.

1. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in your 2020-21 assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year’s report please write N/A as your answer to this question.

N/A

1. What assessment activities will you be conducting during AY 2022-23?

We will continue to rotate through the new common courses, assessing work from either PHIL 126 or PHIL 131.