



PhD Program in Health Care Ethics  
Annual Program Assessment Report  
2020-2021

**I. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, ASSESSMENT METHODS AND RESULTS**

***Program Learning Outcome 2:*** Demonstrate a proficiency in formulating original, normative arguments on topics related to health care ethics.

2020-2021 Relevant Assessment Methods:

- (1) Student performance on final normative research paper in courses: HCE6070, HCE6130, HCE6030, HCE6980 (percentage out of 34 total student papers)

	Problem and Significance	Development of Argument	Integration of Literature	Writing Style and Form
Meets standards	79%	65%	76%	94%
Approaches standards	18%	29%	21%	3%
Fails Standards	3%	6%	3%	3%

- (2) Student performance on written comprehensive exams: (percentage out of 3 students sitting written exam)

	Problem and Significance	Development of Argument	Integration of Literature	Writing Style and Form
Meets standards	100%	100%	100%	100%
Approaches standards	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fails Standards	0%	0%	0%	0%

***Program Learning Outcome 3:*** Demonstrate a proficiency in applying interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to answer ethical questions in real-life health care contexts.

*2020-2021 Relevant Assessment Methods:*

(1) Performance in HCE 6013: Practicum, Final Applied Project:

*“The final applied project in the PhD practicum is a practical educational, policy or research project originating out of the student’s field experiences aimed at improving the ethical practice of medicine.”*

-100% (5/5) students demonstrated proficiency

(2) Performance in the HCE6130: Clinical Ethics, Mock Mediation Sessions:

*“Mock ethics mediations require students to engage in a mock ethics consultation by depicting various character roles and motivations, and mediating the ethical conflict toward the goal of a principled resolution.”*

-100% (12/12) students demonstrated proficiency

***Program Learning Outcome 5: Demonstrate an ability to generate appropriate job search materials (i.e. curriculum vitae, teaching portfolio, writing sample, etc.)***

*2020-2021 Relevant Assessment Methods:*

(1) Job placement rates by job-seeking students and graduates:

-Four students graduated in 2020-2021 and four obtained a full-time bioethics-related job upon or prior to graduation.

-In addition, four students obtained a full-time bioethics-related jobs while still being a PhD(c).

## **II. FINDINGS AND CLOSING THE LOOP: CURRENT ASSESSMENT**

**A.** *When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?*

The 2020-2021 PhD Program Assessment Report was presented to the Health Care Ethics graduate faculty at the annual faculty retreat August 17,2021, spending approximately 45 minutes discussing the findings.

**B.** *How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program?*

Most of the 2020-2021 assessment report findings meet our goals and are consistent with previous years’ reports. However, the “development of argument” criteria under SLO #2 had a higher percentage of students “approaching” and “failing” standards than is typical, and thus this was the focus of the faculty discussion. The department will implement the following strategies to aid student development in this area: (1) additional mentoring sessions on writing skills and argument development, (2) additional writing assignments in PhD coursework that require students to distill normative arguments into 1500-word and 300-word formats. Individual remediation strategies for students “failing” this standard include: (1) weekly writing assignments summarizing the primary argument in readings, (2) regular meetings with instructors about paper topics and arguments, and (3) individualized study of an argument formation text.

### III. FINDINGS AND CLOSING THE LOOP: PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS

- A.** *What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?*

Previous assessment data (as well as this year's data) showed that students sometimes struggled with the "development of argument" criteria under PLO #2 "*Demonstrate a proficiency in formulating original, normative arguments on topics related to health care ethics*". The graduate faculty hypothesized that this may be because some PhD students lack concentrated study in a primary discipline (philosophy, theology, social sciences, law, etc.) via a Masters degree in one of these fields, and thus struggle to deploy discipline-specific methodologies toward the goal of original normative bioethics arguments. Thus, the curriculum "elective" categories were changed from requiring 12 credit hours of any elective course, to requiring 12 credit hours in each of two elective categories: "Disciplinary Lens" (which requires concentrated coursework in a primary disciplinary methodology), and "Bioethics Content", which covers other, non-methodological content related to bioethics. Students with a MA degree may count up to 12 hours total as advanced standing toward these requirements.

- B.** *How has this change/have these changes been assessed?*

They will be assessed using the normative paper and written comprehensive exam assessments of cohorts that matriculate with these new requirements.

- C.** *What were the findings of the assessment?*

This change has not been in effect long enough to observe the longitudinal performance of students matriculating under the new elective structure.

- D.** *How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?*

As we monitor student performance in developing original and well-formulated arguments in the normative paper assignments and written comprehensive exams, we will note the disciplinary background of the student and the elective courses taken. With this information, students will be mentored in a more targeted manner when selecting electives.