SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Master's	Department: Philosophy
Degree or Certificate Level: MA	College/School: CAS
Date (Month/Year): 9/23	Primary Assessment Contact: Scott Ragland

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2022-23

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2015

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?
The ones on the far left column of the below rubric:

Learning Outcome	Fails to Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1 Students will gather sources relevant to a philosophical problem.	Student fails to include necessary sources for the topic or includes irrelevant sources.	Student includes all and only relevant primary and secondary sources. and accurately interprets those writings. The student's paper is a good snapshot of the current state of discussion.	Student includes groundbreaking research into primary sources or synthesizes information in novel ways that advance the current discussion of the topic.
2. Students will interpret sources relevant to that philosophical problem.	Student significantly misinterprets sources	Student's interpretation of sources is accurate and plausible on all significant points.	Student offers a compelling interpretation of sources that is novel or groundbreaking in some way.
3. Students will synthesize sources relevant to that philosophical problem.	Student's synthesis misrepresents the current state of the debate on the topic or fails to adequately connect to the student's defense of own position.	Thesis presents an accurate, unified snapshot of the current state of discussion about a philosophical problem in a way that motivates the student's own argument.	Thesis portrays the current state of discussion in a way that is not only accurate and unified, but also novel—opening up new possibilities for research or argument. The student's own position draws on this portrayal.
4. Students will argue for a philosophical thesis pertaining to that philosophical problem.	Student's thesis is not sufficiently clear, or is not sufficiently related to the focal philosophical problem, or is not sufficiently supported by an argument.	Student articulates and argues for a thesis related to the focal philosophical problem.	Student's thesis or argument is sufficiently original, innovative or excellent as to constitute a publishable contribution to existing literature on the subject.
5. Students will defend their thesis.	Student fails to consider or respond to relevant criticisms, or offers only a superficial or facile response.	Student considers relevant objections and provides rigorous responses.	Student's responses to objections are unusually insightful or novel.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

The plan was to collect one artefact for each graduating MA student from one of the following sources: (1) philosophy MA theses (related to PHIL 5900), or (2) Jesuit "De U" project papers (related to PHIL 5800), (3) a research paper from

a course from the student's final semester in the MA program.   These courses are all offered in St. Louis at the north campus.

3. **Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process**
   What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Supervising faculty score the student work against a google form version of the rubric. Results are collected and evaluated by department chair in the process of writing this report, and the results are discussed at a faculty meeting (this year the meeting occurred on Sept. 29, 2023).

4. **Data/Results**
   What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

3 MA students graduated this year and feedback forms were completed by faculty for 2 of those students. The results are attached if you want to look at the details. Here is a summary.

An average of around 2 suggests that students are on average achieving the desired learning outcomes. Here are the average results for the 5 outcomes on the senior inquiry rubric for this year as compared to recent years:

	20/21 Academic Year	21/22 Academic Year	22/23 Academic Year
Gathers Sources:	No data	2	2.5
Interprets Sources:	No data	2	2.5
Synthesizes Sources:	No data	2	2.5
Argues for Thesis:	No data	2	2.5
Defends Thesis:	No data	2	2.5

5. **Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions**
   What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Conclusions: Insufficient data to draw robust conclusions. However, two years in a row, the students appear to be achieving the learning outcomes. So there is no reason to make curricular changes at this time.

6. **Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of** <u>Current</u> **Assessment Findings**
   A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

These results were discussed at a faculty meeting on Sept. 29, 2023. In that meeting, it was noted that the point system used for processing survey results is not consistent across the degree programs. In future, we should use a consistent scoring system across all rubrics (either 0, 1, 2, or 1, 2, 3). Rubrics will be revised accordingly.

   B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan	• Student learning outcomes	• Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
	• Artifacts of student learning	• Data collection methods
	• Evaluation process	• Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

While meager, the data indicate the curriculum is successful. The current data-gathering process shows promise, but needs at least one more cycle to determine if it is sufficient or if more tweaks are needed.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of <u>Previous</u> Assessment Findings and Changes

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

Year before last, we had a really low faculty participation rate. So last year, we decided to change the data-collection process as follows: the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, Chair, and department administrator meet during the last week of classes to discuss and identify exactly which steps need to be taken to gather assessment data, and to divide out duties among the three of them. By spreading the labor around, this plan makes the job easier to carry out in a hectic time, and by having three people reminded to start planning instead of just one, the system is less fragile. After the chair, CGS, and admin meet, they identify relevant faculty and make sure they have the rubric surveys before they start grading, and are aware of the need to complete them while they are reviewing the student work anyway. This will make the data gathering even more efficient because faculty will not have to read student work twice (once for grading, then later for assessment). For purposes of assessing the MA program, "relevant faculty" will be **all the philosophy instructors of the MA student during their final term** of the program. This will ensure assessment by (in most cases) more than one professor of more than one student artifact at a mature stage of the student's development in the program.

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

They are assessed in the process of writing this report, including at the department meeting where the draft report was discussed.

C.   What were the findings of the assessment?

Although the new system yielded data for 2/3 of the graduating students (a big improvement over the previous year), we did not get multiple reports from the student who was simply finishing coursework (no thesis). So there is some uncertainty about the new system's efficacy. We are going to try it one more year to see if we can become more confident about whether it works.

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

We will review again next year.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.