

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Doctoral	Department: Philosophy
Degree or Certificate Level: PhD	College/School: CAS
Date (Month/Year): 9/21	Primary Assessment Contact: Scott Ragland
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY 20-21	
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 in the far left column of the below rubric:

Learning Outcome	Fails to Meet Expectations (0 pts)	Meets Expectations 1 pt	Exceeds Expectations 2 pts
1. Assess relevant literature or scholarly contributions in philosophy.	Student fails to address essential relevant literature or fails to assess such literature.	Student addresses all essential relevant literature and assesses it.	Student's assessment of relevant literature is unusually illuminating.
2. Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in philosophy.	Dissertation exhibits a lack of mastery of relevant theories, methods, or argumentative practices.	Dissertation shows mastery of some standard methods, theories, or argumentative practices.	Dissertation employs groundbreaking methods or synthesizes existing practices or theories in a novel way.
3. Apply knowledge from the field(s) of study to address problems in broader contexts [e.g., use knowledge of specific topic to advance broader disciplinary discussions]	The dissertation does not advance the state of the discussion on the chosen topic and shows little promise of developing into an early-career research program.	Student synthesizes information uncovered in extensive research to generate a novel thesis that advances the state of the discussion on the chosen topic. The dissertation has strong potential to be mined for future publications, whether articles or books.	The thesis of the dissertation is a "game changer" likely to be highly influential in the field.
4. Articulate arguments or explanations to a disciplinary or professional audience in both oral and written forms.	The dissertation does not clearly articulate arguments in a professional manner, or the student cannot defend such arguments in conversation at the defense.	The dissertation professionally articulates arguments and the student can further defend his or her position at the oral defense.	The dissertation's arguments are unusually powerful or novel, or the student's oral defense of them is unusually strong.
5. Evidence scholarly and/or professional integrity in the field of study.	Dissertation contains plagiarism or shoddy citation methods, and/or the student cannot properly defend it orally.	Dissertation is entirely the student's own work and all sources are clearly cited.	Citation and bibliography are unusually thorough, so as to be especially helpful in understanding the relevant field.

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.

Doctoral Dissertations and their oral defenses. These “courses” were dissertation hours, not offered by way of (a)-(c) above.

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.

Dissertation committee members completed a google form version of the above rubric for each defended dissertation.

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)?

12 Doctoral Students completed the program and some feedback was received for each of them (see the attached results). Here is a summary of the average scores for the current year as compared to the prior year:

	19/20 Academic Year	20/21 Academic Year
LOC 1: Assesses Relevant Literature	1.55	1.6
LOC 2: Apply philosophical methods	1.45	1.48
LOC 3: Address broader problems	1.45	1.48
LOC 4: Articulate argument oral/written	1.9	1.74
LOC 5: Integrity	1.6	1.6

An average score of 1 means that overall the students met expectations. These scores show that many students were exceeding expectations, and none were failing to meet expectations. The summary data are attached.

These students were all at an advanced stage in the PhD program when the pandemic hit, a stage when dissertation writers are typically working on their projects mostly on their own time but with some one-on-one meetings with their supervisors. These one-one-one meetings transitioned from in-person to zoom, but clearly were still effective at enabling these students to achieve a strong finished product.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

What we learned about student learning: the students who complete the program are achieving all the learning goals. There is another group of students who were slowed down by the pandemic. Our LOC assessment instruments do not address this concern, but time-to-degree statistics are reported annually to the dean for graduate education and so are covered by a different sort of assessment/oversight process. This is appropriate because in the current program assessment we are attempting to determine whether students who finish (in whatever amount of time) the degree have achieved the learning goals.

What we learned about the assessment process: Too many faculty are not completing the assessment forms, so that our data are less robust than they could be. Most committees had three members, and one had four, so there would have been 37 responses if we had full participation. Instead there were 23 responses—a faculty participation rate of 62%. This is better than the prior year (when we had just over 50% faculty participation), but still far from ideal.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

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

The philosophy department will discuss this report (and the below recommended change to the evaluation process) at a faculty meeting in October or November of 2021.

- 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
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

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

The return of in-person dissertation defenses creates an opportunity increase faculty participation in the assessment process as follows. At each defense, the examination committee has a discussion about whether to assign a grade of "fail," "pass," or "pass with distinction." The department office will write up instructions for dissertation chairs asking them to distribute a paper copy of the rubric to each committee member. Each examiner will be asked to complete the rubric on their own in preparation for the group grading discussion. This procedure change will connect the data-gathering instrument to an evaluative process that is occurring anyway at the time, and should lead to 100% faculty participation. Should we have to pivot back to zoom defenses, the google form version of the rubrics can be offered to examiners as an alternative way to inform their deliberations around the grading.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

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

No curricular changes have been made because data suggest that students are achieving the learning goals. However, at the end of the last cycle, the following change was proposed for assessment procedures: "To increase faculty participation in the assessment process, the chair and department admin will ask each dissertation supervisor to direct the committee to complete the google survey as they are completing the other dissertation dissertation defense paperwork as a group, right after the defense has been completed."

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

These changes were assessed through tracking the faculty participation rate via the google surveys during 20-21.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

While the changes produced some improvement in the participation rate, they did not achieve the goal for which they were adopted—100% participation.

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

By adopting the proposed plan above: create written instructions for chairs/committees that specify completion of the rubrics as a way of calibrating each examiner's recommended grade for the defense. Distribute these instructions with each set of examination ballots.

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