Weber State University
Biennial Report on Assessment of Student Learning

Cover Page

Department/Program: Philosophy
Academic Year of Report: 2019/20 (covering Summer 2017 through Spring 2020)
Date Submitted: 12/1/20
Report author: Mary Beth Willard

Contact Information:
Phone: (801) 626-6711
Email: marybethwillard@weber.edu

Report due 11/15/2020

We have updated the Institutional Effectiveness website, which includes an update for each program page. All Biennial Assessment and Program Review reports will now be available on a single page. Please review your page for completeness and accuracy, and indicate on the list below the changes that need to be made. Access your program page from the top-level results page. Select the appropriate college and then your program from the subsequent page.

A. Mission Statement

X Information is current; no changes required.

Update if not current:

B. Student Learning Outcomes

X Information is current; no changes required.

Update if not current:

C. Curriculum (please note, we are using Google Sheets for this section so that updates are easier to make)

___ Information is current; no changes required.

Update if not current (you may have access to the Google Sheet if that is easiest, or we can make the updates):
Curriculum Map

Core Courses in Program	**Program Learning Outcomes**				
	Knowledge of: Historical	Knowledge of: Topical	Knowledge How: Critical Thinking	Knowledge How: Reading Comprehension	Knowledge How: Writing Skills
PHIL HU1000 Introduction to Philosophy	I	I	I	I	I
PHIL 4900 Capstone Seminar		M	M	M	M

Note[a]: I = Introduced, M = Mastered
Note[b]: Rows and columns should be transposed as required to meet the needs of each individual department

Additional Information (if needed)

"Knowledge Of" Learning Outcomes:
1. Historical Knowledge
2. Topical Knowledge

"Knowledge How" Learning Outcomes:
1. Critical Thinking
2. Reading Comprehension

3. Writing Skills

D. Program and Contact Information

_X__ Information is current; no changes required.

Update if not current:

Fine with me to keep Thom as the current contact.

E. Assessment Plan (please see our website for details on how to develop a program assessment plan)

___ Information is current; no changes required.

Update if not current: (this update can be via a Google Sheet if that is easiest; we can then embed the Google Sheet on your program web page, as we do with the curriculum grid)

Semester	**Core and Gen Ed Courses to be Assessed**			
	PHIL1000 Intro to Philosophy*	PHIL1120 Contemporary Moral Problems**	PHIL1250 Critical Thinking*	PHIL4900 Capstone Seminar
Fall 2018		X		
Spring 2019	X		X	X
Fall 2019				
Spring 2020				X
Fall 2020		X		
Spring 2021	X		X	X
Fall 2021				
Spring 2022				X
Fall 2022		X		
Spring 2023	X		X	X

New: High Impact Educational Experiences in the Curriculum

In response to the recent USHE requirement that all students have at least 1 HIEE in the first 30 credit hours and 1 HIEE in the major or minor we are asking programs to map HIEEs to curriculum using a traditional curriculum grid. This helps demonstrate how and where these goals are accomplished.

Courses	Department/Program use of High Impact Educational Experiences							
	Capstone	Study Abroad	Project-Based Learning	HIEE 4	Etc…			
PHIL 4900 (major)	X							
PHIL 2920		X						
PHIL 4830			x					

HIEEs include capstone courses or experiences, community-engaged learning, evidence-based teaching practices, internships, project-based learning, study abroad/away, supplemental instruction, team-based learning, undergraduate research, pre-professional/career development experiences.

Additional information (HIEE planning, assessment, or other information):

In the 2017 report we noted that we are moving to assessing our lower division HU courses (PHIL 1000, 1120, and 1250) as in the past, and accomplishing assessment of upper division courses via assessment of PHIL 4900.

Specifically, we will continue assessing our Intro to Philosophy class (both program and gen ed learning outcomes), as well as our other two gen ed classes (Critical Thinking and Contemporary Moral Problems). However, assessment of our core areas will all occur as part of our Senior Capstone Seminar. This will involve two components. First, all students will continue to be required to complete a capstone project (research paper), which will be assessed as it always has been. Second, in lieu of the area exams formerly required of all majors (which produced data of questionable value to us, and yielded nothing of value for our students), we are now requiring all majors to compile a professional portfolio comprised of at least three papers, covering each of the three core areas of History of Philosophy, Value Theory (ethics and aesthetics), and Metaphysics and Epistemology.

The papers students choose for these three areas will represent what they consider the best work they have completed in their philosophy courses and need not come from one of the courses whose names match our core learning areas. (For example, a student might choose a paper from Philosophy of Mind to count as their core Metaphysics and Epistemology class.) While these papers will not be graded by the Capstone Seminar instructor, they will be assessed using our existing assessment instrument. The goal will be to give us a sense of where our students are at the end of their programs. Finally, we will begin reporting a summary of the exit interviews that all of our graduates (majors and minors) are required to complete prior to graduation.

F. Report of assessment results since the last report:

There are varieties of ways in which departments can choose to show evidence of learning. This is one example. The critical pieces to include are 1) learning outcome being assessed, 2) method(s) of measurement used, 3) threshold for 'acceptable – that is, the target performance, 4) actual results of the assessment, 5) interpretation/reflection on findings 6) the course of action to be taken based upon the interpretation, and 7) how that action will be evaluated.

A. Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major
(**this is a sample page for purpose of illustration only**; a blank template can be found on the next page or at this site)

Evidence of Learning: Core Areas PHIL 1000 Introduction to Philosophy, Spring 2019					
Program Learning Goal Students will…	**Measurable Learning Outcome Students will…**	**Method of Measurement Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
Goal 1: Knowledge Of: Historical Knowledge	Identify the main ideas associated with at least three major historical philosophers	Five questions from final exam (69 students, two sections)	Students averaged 81% on the exam quesations (proficiency is 70% or higher)	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 2: Knowledge Of: Topical Knowledge	Demonstrate knowledge of discipline-specific terminology	Five questions from final exam (69 students, two sections)	Students averaged 81% on these questions (proficiency is 70% or higher)	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time.
Goal 3: Knowledge How: Critical Thinking	Distinguish between and assess different kinds of arguments	Five questions from final exam (69 students, two sections)	Students averaged a 71.2 on these questions (proficiency is 70% or higher)	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time, but some attention is warranted; students struggle with logic and reasoning
Goal 4: Knowledge How: Reading Comprehension	Identify and summarize the competing philosophical positions contained within a passage or text	Written assignment "Short Argument Reconstruction 2"	Students averaged 80% on these questions (proficiency is 70% or higher)	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 5: Knowledge How: Critical Thinking	Evaluate the reasoning contained within a	Written assignment, "Develop an Objection"	Students averaged 89.6% on these questions	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time

Evidence of Learning: Core Areas PHIL 1000 Introduction to Philosophy, Spring 2019					
Program Learning Goal **Students will…**	**Measurable Learning Outcome** **Students will…**	**Method of Measurement** **Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
	philosophical passage or text		(proficiency is 70% or higher)		

c. Evidence of Learning: General Education Courses

Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major PHIL 1250 Critical Thinking, Spring 2019						
Program Learning Goal **Students will…**	**Measurable Learning Outcome** **Students will…**	**Method of Measurement** **Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning**	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
Goal 1: Knowledge How: Critical Thinking	a. identify and reconstruct arguments contained within passages	One question on exam 1 on constructing Beardsley diagrams, a diagrammatic way of representing arguments (77 results from 2 sections)	70% or higher	Students averaged 83% on this question.	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
	b. determine whether an argument commits a logic fallacy and, if so, identify which one and explain how it is committed	Two questions (a high-scoring and a low-scoring) from an exam on fallacies (75 results from 2 sections)	70% or higher	Scores were 71% and 93% on the questions, with an average of 82%.	Students met expectations of learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
	c. identify cognitive and perceptual errors that might be affecting an author's reasoning with an argumentative passage	Eight questions from an exam on identifying errors of reasoning (75 results from 2 sections)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 81% on the questions	Students met expectations of learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
	d. formulate and evaluate competing hypotheses for phenomena in need of explanation, so as to make an informed judgment about the hypotheses' comparative strengths	Exam question having students evaluate competing explanations (39 results from fall 2018 exam; instructor's mom passed away in spring 2019, preventing the testing of this material)	70% or higher	Students averaged a 74%	Students met expectations of learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time

Additional narrative (optional – use as much space as needed):

We have deferred assessing the capstone (PHIL 4900) until the next biennial assessment report due to a lack of useable data. There were two problems with collecting the data, which was to correspond to two semesters (Spring 2019 and Spring 2020.) In Spring 2019 we had only one student complete the capstone, and the student in question had presented both disciplinary and pedagogical problems over the student's time at Weber, and this was reflected in the general quality of the student's work. In Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that all of the students enrolled in the course elected to withdraw and complete it in a later semester. Neither semester yielded actionable data.

We are a small program with a small number of majors, and this presents significant challenges in the collection of meaningful data in our upper-division courses. We find that we have a good sense of the strengths of our program and students informally, but find it challenging to find an assessment model that can represent our upper division courses both accurately and quantitatively. PHIL 4900 now includes (as described above) a portfolio of student work in additional to a final original paper, which allows us to assess students' work over the course of their careers. The small sample size, however, remains a challenge.

c. Evidence of Learning: General Education Courses

Evidence of Learning: General Education Learning Goals PHIL 1250 Critical Thinking, Spring 2019					
Measurable Learning Outcome **Students will…**	**Method of Measurement** **Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning**	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
Goal 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse philosophical traditions, as well as key themes, concepts, issues, terminology, and ethical standards in philosophy.	Fallacies exam, which pulled examples from a variety of philosophical traditions and tested their knowledge of key philosophical terminology (75 results from 2 sections)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 81% on the exam	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 2: Students will analyze cultural artifacts within philosophy	Four questions requiring the analysis of syllogistic reasoning contained within argumentative passages (24 results from 1 section)	70% or higher	Students averaged 82.5% on these questions	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate their understanding of humanities materials in written, oral, or graphic forms.	Exam question having students evaluate competing explanations (39 results from fall 2018 exam; instructor's mom passed away in spring 2019, preventing the testing of this material)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 74% on these questions	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time

Evidence of Learning: General Education Learning Goals PHIL 1120 Contemporary Moral Problems, Fall, 2018						
Program Learning Goal **Students will…**	**Measurable Learning Outcome** **Students will…**	**Method of Measurement** **Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning**	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
Goal 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse philosophical traditions, as well as key themes, concepts, issues, terminology, and ethical standards in philosophy.	Demonstrate knowledge of discipline-specific terminology	Students assessed on a writing assignment (Term Paper)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 88 out of 100	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 2: Students will analyze cultural artifacts within philosophy. (For our purposes, this will be interpreted as involving logical analysis of philosophy texts.)	Distinguish between and assess different kinds of arguments	Students assessed on a writing assignment (Term Paper)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 81 out of 100	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate their understanding of philosophical issues in written, oral, or graphic forms	Identify and summarize the competing philosophical positions contained within a passage or text	Students assessed on a writing assignment (Term Paper)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 83 out of 100	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time

Evidence of Learning: General Education Learning Goals PHIL 1000 Introduction to Philosophy, Spring 2020						
Program Learning Goal **Students will…**	**Measurable Learning Outcome** **Students will…**	**Method of Measurement** **Direct and Indirect Measures***	**Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning**	**Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes**	**Interpretation of Findings**	**Action Plan/Use of Results**
Goal 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse philosophical traditions, as well as key themes, concepts, issues, terminology, and ethical standards in philosophy.	Demonstrate knowledge of discipline-specific terminology	Fifteen questions from final exam (69 students, two sections)	70% or higher	Students averaged a 78%.	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 2: Students will analyze cultural artifacts within philosophy. (For our purposes, this will be interpreted as involving logical analysis of philosophy texts.)	Distinguish between and assess different kinds of arguments	Students assessed on a writing assignment ("Short Argument Reconstruction 2" and "Develop and Objection")	70% or higher	Students averaged an 85% out of 100	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time
Goal 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate their understanding of philosophical issues in written, oral, or graphic forms	Identify and summarize the competing philosophical positions contained within a passage or text	Students assessed on a writing assignment (Signature Assignment)	70% or higher	Students averaged an 81%	Students met the expectations of the learning outcome	No curricular or pedagogical changes needed at this time

Appendix A

Most departments or programs receive a number of recommendations from their Five/Seven-Year Program Review processes. This page provides a means of updating progress towards the recommendations the department/program is enacting.

Date of Program Review: 2016	Recommendation	Progress Description
-Hire fourth tenure-track faculty member	- We recommend that the Philosophy Department be considered for and given a fourth full time faculty person. This would benefit both the students' learning opportunities and the current full time faculty's need to teach the required courses in curriculum on what is now a more restricted schedule of course offerings.	2018-2020 progress: Hired Dr. Paul Neiman (second hire in this line – first was Dr. Valerie Williams in 2017-2018)
-Offer team-taught, interdisciplinary courses with the aim of exposing more students to philosophy.	-We recommend that the faculty explore more possibilities for offering team-taught, interdisciplinary courses, which would engage with the faculty of other selected programs such as Psychology, Economics, Neuroscience, Art and Political Science, and so on. Such courses could be cross-listed with the other discipline as electives. These courses would expose more students to Philosophy and possibly serve as incentives for students not yet connected to Philosophy through previous course work to consider Philosophy as a second major or a minor. [A fourth full-time faculty member makes this strategy even more feasible than it would be with just the	2019-2020: Dr. Willard team-taught a course with Dr. Jennifer Kokai in Theater History (Eccles Fellowship, Honors Program) 2019-2020: Dr. Fudge developed an Environmental Philosophy course with SUS designation.

	three current full time faculty. Perhaps Philosophy adjuncts could also be employed in this vein. Such interdisciplinary courses might also stimulate the development of additional "minor" tracks in Philosophy.	

Additional narrative:

We are quite pleased to have added a fourth line, and as the reviewers predicted, it has allowed faculty to develop new course offerings and pursue interdisciplinary team teaching. We are continuing this work into 2021, including another team-taught Honors course and the development of a lower division general education course focused on ethics and technology.

Appendix B

Please provide the following information about the full-time *and adjunct faculty* contracted by your department during the last academic year (summer through spring). Gathering this information each year will help with the headcount reporting that must be done for the final Five Year Program Review document that is shared with the State Board of Regents.

Faculty Headcount	2018-19	2019-20
With Doctoral Degrees (Including MFA and other terminal degrees, as specified by the institution)		
Full-time Tenured	3	3
Full-time Non-Tenured (includes tenure-track)	1	1
Part-time and adjunct	1	1
With Master's Degrees		
Full-time Tenured		
Full-time Non-Tenured		
Part-time and adjunct	3	3
With Bachelor's Degrees		
Full-time Tenured		
Full-time Non-tenured		
Part-time and adjunct		
Other		
Full-time Tenured		
Full-time Non-tenured		
Part-time		
Total Headcount Faculty		
Full-time Tenured		
Full-time Non-tenured		
Part-time		

Please respond to the following questions.

1) First year student success is critical to WSU's retention and graduation efforts. We are interested in finding out how departments support their first-year students. Do you have mechanisms and processes in place to identify, meet with, and support first-year students? Please provide a brief narrative focusing on your program's support of new students:

    a. **Any** first-year students taking courses in your program(s)

    We do not have any formal mechanisms in place specifically aimed at first-year students.

    b. Students declared in your program(s), whether or not they are taking courses in your program(s)

    We do not have any formal mechanisms in place. The virtue of our small size has meant that most of our majors who are taking courses have taken multiple courses with each of us and can be advised ad hoc.

    As you can see, this is something that we haven't considered formally in the past. All of us support first-year students by informally reaching out, using Starfish to raise flags and communicate with advisors as needed, and designing courses that, per our strategic planning report, encourage retention through high completion rates. We are tracking completion rates annually, but we do not have mechanisms developed to support students.

2) A key component of sound assessment practice is the process of 'closing the loop' – that is, following up on changes implemented as a response to your assessment findings, to determine the impact of those changes/innovations. It is also an aspect of assessment on which we need to improve, as suggested in our NWCCU mid-cycle report. Please describe the processes your program has in place to 'close the loop'.

    We do not have anything formal in place to 'close the loop'.

We are open to suggestion on best practices for implementation of formal mechanisms for retention and closing the loop.

Glossary

Student Learning Outcomes/Measurable Learning Outcomes

The terms 'learning outcome', 'learning objective', 'learning competency', and 'learning goal' are often used interchangeably. Broadly, these terms reference what we want students to be able to do AFTER they pass a course or graduate from a program. For this document, we will use the word 'outcomes'. Good learning outcomes are specific (but not too specific), are observable, and are clear. Good learning outcomes focus on skills: knowledge and understanding; transferrable skills; habits of mind; career skills; attitudes and values.

- Should be developed using action words (if you can see it, you can assess it).
- Use compound statements judiciously.
- Use complex statements judiciously.

Curriculum Grid

A chart identifying the key learning outcomes addressed in each of the curriculum's key elements or learning experiences (Suskie, 2019). A good curriculum:

- Gives students ample, diverse opportunities to achieve core learning outcomes.
- Has appropriate, progressive rigor.
- Concludes with an integrative, synthesizing capstone experience.
- Is focused and simple.
- Uses research-informed strategies to help students learn and succeed.
- Is consistent across venues and modalities.
- Is greater than the sum of its parts.

Target Performance (previously referred to as 'Threshold')

The level of performance at which students are doing well enough to succeed in later studies (e.g., next course in sequence or next level of course) or career.

Actual Performance

How students performed on the specific assessment. An average score is less meaningful than a distribution of scores (for example, 72% of students met or exceeded the target performance, 5% of students failed the assessment).

Closing the Loop

The process of following up on changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, materials, etc., to determine if the changes had the desired impact.

Continuous Improvement
An idea with roots in manufacturing, that promotes the ongoing effort to improve. Continuous improvement uses data and evidence to improve student learning and drive student success.

Direct evidence
Evidence based upon actual student work; performance on a test, a presentation, or a research paper, for example. Direct evidence is tangible, visible, and measurable.

Indirect evidence
Evidence that serves as a proxy for student learning. May include student opinion/perception of learning, course grades, measures of satisfaction, participation. Works well as a complement to direct evidence.

HIEE – High Impact Educational Experiences
Promote student learning through curricular and co-curricular activities that are intentionally designed to foster active and integrative student engagement by utilizing multiple impact strategies. Please see https://weber.edu/weberthrives/HIEE.html