

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2018-2019

PROGRAM: Philosophy (B.A.)
SUBMITTED BY: Ariane Economos
DATE: 9/30/2019

Executive Summary: Description of Assessment Process

List *all* of the program's learning outcomes, as of the assessment year's catalog:

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year (Y=Yes)	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Students demonstrate a broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problems of human existence.	2015-2016	N	2020-2021
Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.	2017-2018	Y	2021-2022
Students demonstrate the role of critical thinking and reason in the understanding of and production of philosophical work.	2017-2018	Y	2021-2022
Students conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	2016-2017	N	2020-2021
Students demonstrate epistemic virtues such as intellectual curiosity, courage to engage in independent inquiry, humility to hold beliefs provisionally, and a commitment to perfect one's personal world view.	2016-2017	N	2020-2021

Provide a **brief** description of the assessment process used including how results are shared and discussed and strengths, challenges, and planned improvements to the process, providing evidence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment. If there is something that is impeding your ability to implement improvements, please comment on those issues:

We included a total of sixteen papers for assessment. The papers were collected from our one graduating senior, all three of our sophomore or junior majors, and six of our minors. Each paper was a minimum of 4 pages in length. The papers were prepared for blind review. We used two rubrics – the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric and Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric - to assess the extent to which two of our outcomes were achieved in these written products. Full-time faculty members in the philosophy department participated in the assessment process. Additionally, an exit interview was conducted with the graduating senior. Thus, the assessment was conducted in five ways:

1. We measured these outcomes in our graduating senior's senior-level written work, and compared it to her work during her previous years at Marymount (direct).
2. We measured these outcomes in the written work of all three of our sophomore or junior majors (direct).
3. We measured these outcomes in the written work of six of our minors (direct).
4. We measured these outcomes in departmental meetings that were focused on student performance (indirect).
5. We measured these outcomes in exit interviews conducted with graduating senior (indirect).

The philosophy program faces at least one significant **challenge** in assessment, and that is our small number of majors. Only one student graduated with a BA in Philosophy this year. In order to have a meaningful assessment of our program, therefore, we included a portfolio of written work by that graduating senior, collected over her years at Marymount, as well as current written products from both our majors and our minors in this year's assessment process.

In the future, **we plan to improve our assessment process** by continuing to update and improve the rubrics used for assessment, by conducting exit interviews with the majors who will be graduating this year, and by including data from our alumni as an indirect measure (we did not receive feedback from alumni this year). Additionally, we plan to propose to PIE that we move to a two-year

assessment cycle, which would provide us with two years of data on two years' worth of students passing through our points of assessment. The University Assessment Committee has recommended that we make this change to our assessment cycle, as it would make the process more meaningful.

I believe that the ways in which we implemented improvements to our program, as documented below, provides evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement.

Closing the Loop: Progress on Planned Improvements from Prior Year

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.	Based upon assessment of this outcome, we plan to improve our curriculum by increasing the number of courses in applied ethics that we offer. In particular, we plan to develop a course in bioethics, medical ethics, and/or healthcare ethics, and also plan to develop a course in cyber-ethics. Developing these courses will hopefully encourage our majors and minors to include more courses in which they learn to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.	We accomplished this improvement over the course 2018-2019. During this time, we improved our curriculum by developing two new courses in applied ethics: biomedical ethics (which includes healthcare ethics), and cyber-ethics. These courses have been added to the catalog and are being offered this year. We will be interested to see if majors and minors who take these courses show increased ability in synthesizing and assessing moral arguments.
Students demonstrate the role of critical thinking and reason in the understanding of and production of philosophical work.	Based upon the assessment of this outcome, we plan to improve our curriculum by requesting that instructors explicitly include informal logic in the content of their lower-level courses. Additionally, we are going to suggest to the Philosophy Club (which includes all majors and minors) that they host events that serve to develop and strengthen this outcome. For example, have “debate nights,” where students debate a current issue using correct methods of argumentation and avoiding fallacies, may help our students to become better able to demonstrate the role of reasoning in the production of philosophical work.	We partially accomplished this improvement over the course of 2018-2019. During this time, we improved our co-curricular program events by hosting Philosophy Club events in which students engage with correct methods of argumentation in order to debate current events. Because new faculty were brought onboard during this academic year, we decided to wait until they had settled in a bit at MU and had some experience of our student population, before considering adding requirements to our lower-level syllabi (such as including informal logic in all courses). We will be discussing whether we would like to move forward with this

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
		during our department meetings this year.

Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:

Comment: Last year’s University Assessment Committee’s review of the program’s report recommended (1) being careful to “**use consistent terminology** for what the milestone/target should be.” The Committee also recommended (2) “**proposing to PIE that you move to a two-year cycle**, which would provide you with two years of data on two years’ worth of students passing through your points of assessment... it would make the process more meaningful to you.”

Response: The department has made sure (1) to **use consistent terminology** throughout the assessment process. With regard to the Committee’s second suggestion, we are (2) **requesting that PIE allow us to move to a two-year cycle**, to increase the data available to us per assessment report.

Outcomes Assessment 2018-2019

Learning Outcome 1: Students synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments.

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the improvement in our only graduating Senior’s written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.</p>	<p>The student’s senior-level work should be at level 3.5 or higher overall. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from across the student’s years at Marymount. We only had one graduating senior, so the population was one. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then returned to the Chair and the data was compiled into this report.</p>	<p>The student’s senior-level work was assessed at 3.5 or higher overall, and so met the acceptable level of student performance. Additionally, the student’s portfolio of work showed improvement over time.</p>
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the written work of all three of our sophomore or junior majors was measured.</p>	<p>Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2.5 or higher overall. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from the students’ work. We only had three majors in total, so the population was three. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then</p>	<p>Our students met this target, with the work of our three sophomore or junior majors receiving an overall assessment of 2.5 or higher. Having said this, students received a significantly lower rating for the “ethical self-awareness” trait, and a somewhat lower rating for the “evaluation of different ethical perspectives/concepts” trait.</p>

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
		<p>returned to the Chair and the data was compiled into this report.</p>	
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Ethical Reasoning VALUE rubric, the written work of six current minors was measured.</p>	<p>Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2 or higher overall. It is acceptable for freshmen to be at level 1 if the paper is taken from their first philosophy course, but it should show development toward level 2. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from the students’ work. The work of 8 minors was included. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then returned to the Chair and the data was compiled into this report.</p>	<p>This set of students did meet this target, with their work receiving an overall assessment of 2 or higher. However, as with the assessment of majors, these students also performed more poorly on the “ethical self-awareness” trait.</p>
<p>Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of the performance of majors in this area was conducted once per semester.</p>	<p>Three or more out of five full-time faculty should hold that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate the outcome, as evidenced by the student’s academic performance, both written and oral.</p>	<p>Full-time faculty discussed and compared student outcomes in their classes in this area during department meetings.</p>	<p>Four out of five full-time faculty held that majors in their classes demonstrated this outcome, as evidenced by the students’ academic performance, both written and oral.</p>
<p>Indirect Measure: Exit interview with graduating senior.</p>	<p>The student should demonstrate an understanding of this outcome and the ways in which it will serve her in future career opportunities.</p>	<p>The Chair met with the graduating student and conducted the interview. We only had one graduating Senior, so the population was one.</p>	<p>The student clearly demonstrated an understanding of this outcome, as evidence by her ability to discuss and assess moral argument during the interview. She also demonstrated knowledge of how this outcome can serve her in future career opportunities.</p>

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

One program **strength** is the **flexibility** our program offers when it comes to the course of study necessary to complete the major or minor. Students should be able to take courses in both theoretical and applied ethics as part of the major or minor, which will help them to develop this outcome in more of their work. Working from the results of our previous assessment, we recently increased the number of courses we offer in applied ethics. Since these classes are now in the catalog and being offered starting this Fall, one **opportunity for improvement** that our program has is the opportunity to **encourage our majors to take more courses in applied ethics**. Students with an interest in business ethics, environmental ethics, social and political ethics, and theoretical ethics have had a number of sections of classes per year from which to choose. Beginning this year, students can now also choose to biomedical ethics and cyber-ethics. Thus, any majors and minors who struggle to meet this outcome can be encouraged to take a range of classes that will help them to develop these skills.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

Based upon assessment of this outcome, we plan to **encourage students to take a range of courses in applied ethics**. Given that students performed significantly more poorly on the “ethical self-awareness” trait, and somewhat poorly on the “evaluation of different ethical perspectives/concepts” trait, **instructors in all ethics courses will be notified of this**, and asked to particularly work with students to develop in these two areas.

Learning Outcome 2: Students demonstrate the role of critical thinking and reason in the understanding of and production of philosophical work.

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the improvement in our only graduating senior’s written work across her four years at Marymount was measured.</p>	<p>The student’s senior-level work should be at level 3.5 or higher. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from across the student’s years at Marymount. We only had one graduating senior, so the population was one. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then returned to the Chair and the data was</p>	<p>The student’s senior-level work was assessed at 3.5 or higher overall, and so met the acceptable level of student performance. Additionally, the student’s portfolio of work showed improvement over time.</p>

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
		<p>compiled into this report.</p>	
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the written work of all three of our sophomore or junior majors was measured.</p>	<p>Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2.5 or higher overall. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from the students’ work. We only had three majors in total, so the population was three. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then returned to the Chair and the data was compiled into this report.</p>	<p>We did meet this target, with the work of our three majors receiving an overall assessment of 2.5 or higher. Having said this, students received a lower rating for the “conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)” trait.</p>
<p>Direct Measure: Using the AAC&U’s Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, the written work of six current minors was measured.</p>	<p>Junior and sophomore-level work should be at level 2 or higher overall. It is acceptable for freshmen to be at level 1 if the paper is taken from their first philosophy course, but it should show development toward level 2. Please see the rubric in the appendix for more information about our measurement scale.</p>	<p>Written products at least 4 pages in length were selected from the students’ work. The work of 8 minors was included. The written work was collected by full-time faculty and sent to the Chair. The Chair removed all identifying information from the student work, and then sent the work, along with rubrics, to be assessed by full-time faculty in the Philosophy Department. Completed rubrics were then returned to the Chair and the data was compiled into this report.</p>	<p>This set of students did meet this target, with their work receiving an overall assessment of 2 or higher. However, as with the assessment of majors, these students also performed more poorly on the “conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)” trait.</p>

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i>	Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i>
Indirect Measure: Departmental discussion of the performance of majors and minors in this area was conducted once per semester.	Three or more out of five full-time faculty should hold that the majority of the majors and minors in their classes demonstrate the outcome, as evidenced by the student's academic performance, both written and oral.	Full-time faculty discussed and compared student outcomes in their classes in this area during department meetings.	Three out of five full-time faculty held that majors in their classes demonstrated this outcome, as evidenced by the students' academic performance, both written and oral.
Indirect Measure: Exit interview with graduating senior .	The student should demonstrate an understanding of this outcome and the ways in which it will serve her in future career opportunities.	The Chair met with the graduating student and conducted the interview. We only had one graduating Senior, so the population was one.	The student demonstrated an understanding of this outcome, as evidence by her ability to utilize critical thinking during the interview, and to assess the importance of this in developing good philosophical work. She also demonstrated knowledge of how this outcome will serve her in future career opportunities.

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

As discussed above, one program **strength** is the **flexibility** our program offers when it comes to the course of study necessary to complete the major or minor. Thus, students who seem to be struggling to achieve this outcome should be able to take courses such as Logic, that primarily focus on the development of reasoning and critical thinking skills, as part of their progress toward their degree. One **opportunity for improvement** is to provide more direction when advising students which courses to take. While all majors are required to take Logic, minors are not. Advising minors who are struggling with reasoning skills to take this class may be beneficial. Another **opportunity for improvement** may be to require all lower-level courses to include at least a couple of weeks of material on the identification of informal fallacies and at least an introduction to formal reasoning. While students are being taught these skills across the classes in our program, it might help to get students on the right track early on by having a portion of a lower-level class explicitly dedicated to developing this outcome.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

Based upon the assessment of this outcome, we plan to **improve our curriculum** by requesting that instructors **explicitly include informal logic in the content of their lower-level courses**. This was a planned improvement from last year that was not completed, but hopefully will be implemented over the next two years. Additionally, we will continue to support the Philosophy Club (which includes all majors and minors) in hosting events that serve to develop and strengthen this outcome. Given that students performed more poorly on the "conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)" trait, **instructors in all of our writing-intensive courses will be notified of this**, and asked to especially work with students in developing this skill in their written arguments.



Appendices *(please only include items that will help reviewers understand your process – for example, test questions, rubrics, survey questions, more detailed description of assessment measures, summary tables of survey results, etc.)*

Please see our **rubrics**, which are attached separately, for more information.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i>	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

ETHICAL REASONING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
Ethical Self-Awareness	Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs and discussion has greater depth and clarity.	Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	Student states both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	Student states either their core beliefs or articulates the origins of the core beliefs but not both.
Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student names the theory or theories, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and accurately explains the details of the theory or theories used.	Student can name the major theory or theories she/he uses, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and attempts to explain the details of the theory or theories used, but has some inaccuracies.	Student can name the major theory she/he uses, and is only able to present the gist of the named theory.	Student only names the major theory she/he uses.
Ethical Issue Recognition	Student can recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context AND can recognize cross-relationships among the issues.	Student can recognize ethical issues when issues are presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context OR can grasp cross-relationships among the issues.	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and grasp (incompletely) the complexities or interrelationships among the issues.	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships.
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student can independently apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider full implications of the application.	Student can independently apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, but does not consider the specific implications of the application.	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, independently (to a new example) and the application is inaccurate.	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question with support (using examples, in a class, in a group, or a fixed-choice setting) but is unable to apply ethical perspectives/concepts independently (to a new example.).
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, and the student's defense is adequate and effective.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of, and respond to the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, but the student's response is inadequate.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts but does not respond to them (and ultimately objections, assumptions, and implications are compartmentalized by student and do not affect student's position.)	Student states a position but cannot state the objections to and assumptions and limitations of the different perspectives/concepts.