

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Theology and Religious Studies
SUBMITTED BY: Brian Doyle
DATE: Fall 2020

Executive Summary: Description of Assessment Process

List *all* of the program’s learning outcomes, as of the assessment year’s catalog: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Analyze the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimension of the self and the individual’s role in establishing a just community	2016	Y	2020
Apply theological principles in the examination of the dialogue between faith and reason	2016	Y	2020
Theologically analyze doctrinal and dogmatic statements and arguments	2018		2022
Theologically analyze scriptural and historical source materials	2018		2022
Academically defend the dignity of the human person and for the condition of human diversity through thoughtful engagement with diverse religious traditions	2014		2024
Practice civil engagement through discussion of religious differences and the possibility of pluralism	2014		2024
Articulate a global and historical perspective by examining a wide range of religious traditions in their cultural contexts	2014		2024

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 (generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points):

Assessment continues to be a difficult process for the program given its small number of majors. We worked hard in recruitment and had added several majors – two of whom transferred out of the university. So over the two years assessed here, we had two students finish the curricular parts of the major. One has yet to graduate as she still needs to do an internship.

Faculty continue to collect all written works (papers and exams) of majors and submit them to the (outgoing) department chair. Doyle looks through them for development. We do not have formal meetings because of the small numbers but Doyle communicates with appropriate faculty if questions arise. We did not receive and GSS reports this cycle because of low numbers.

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
Apply theological principles in the examination of the	TRS 280 will be offered again in Spring 2019. Several improvements will be made as a result of the faculty	Because of the phased retirement of Dr. Porter, the offering of TRS 280 was moved to Fall 2020. The planned modifications have been implemented

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update
dialogue between faith and reason	member’s assessment of the course and the results of the final papers, exams, and student evaluations. Specific modifications need not be discussed here but it was clear that the students were not as prepared to discuss evolutionary biology as assumed by the professor. So, yeah, I blame the science department.	(different texts, papers reflective of student concerns, more group work). Results are this point appear to be positive but it will not be conclusive until next assessment cycle.
theologically analyze scriptural and historical source materials	We MUST do a better job of engaging the adjuncts in assessment – at least to the point of submitting papers.	Upon hiring, adjuncts are informed that monitoring majors is an expected aspect of their positions. Because of the reduced number of sections and the new faculty structure of the department (2 instructors which teach two sections of TRS 100 each) and the reduction of course releases, we have had no upper level classes taught by adjuncts in this cycle.

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

Comment: All faculty including adjuncts could be encouraged to use Canvas for students to submit their papers. This will allow for electronic capture of not only the student papers, but also the instructor’s comments on the papers. The Chair can be given access to the course at the assessment stage or the instructor can share the papers to be used for the assessment purposes electronically with the Chair eliminating the difficulties currently experienced with adjunct faculty. The table of outcomes and assessment years is confusing as the years are not in the Academic year format (are in calendar years). The two outcomes marked with an X, we assume, indicate 2018 (even if part of the year being assessed was in 2017 technically). Good job on the changes (events, website, new courses) you are implementing.

Response:

The (outgoing) chair has access to Canvas of all TRS sections. All papers of majors were captured.

I have changed the years on the table. It was confusing to me as well.

Outcomes Assessment 2019-2020

Learning Outcome 1: Analyze the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimension of the self and the individual's role in establishing a just community

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>
Assessment of Senior thesis papers (direct) and assessment of papers for TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World (majors only)	Students (at least ½) demonstrate the ability to relate learning of their TRS E course (351, 352, or 353) with majors only projects in a way that shows a 3.5/4.0 with the rubric for this outcome	Both papers were written with Dr. Doyle for Senior Seminar. No students completed TRS 451. Doyle did the assessment. One paper scored all fours on the rubric, the other paper scored 2.8/4.0 with several "N/A"	We met the target. One senior thesis showed mastery of the objective. The other was written by a dual major with history. This paper barely met graduation requirements as the student struggled with mental health issues for the two years of writing.
Review of Graduate Student responses and exit interviews (indirect)	Students demonstrate the ability to analyze their program and see this as a fundamental outcome	We had no GSS. Doyle did the exit survey of one of two students. Other refused to be interviewed.	The student interviewed took TRS 351 and found its emphasis on social justice to be an essential aspect of the program. Her internship was working for a parish with youth that are socio-economically challenged so this outcomes was supported throughout her program.

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?*

Given the work of the one major, we see this as a strength of the department and the program. We do not see a need for revision of the major at this point. All majors must pass a TRS E class and, in most cases, this work permeates the remainder of their studies in their internships, work in TRS 451 and their senior theses.

Our second graduate during this time really struggled her last year. With much effort, she was able to finish a thesis that met the lowest passing requirements of TRS and History (double major). It is a shame that she had these struggles and they became obvious in her work because she was a strong student who wrote good papers before her health issues.

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

None at this time.

Learning Outcome 2: Apply theological principles in the examination of the dialogue between faith and reason

Outcome Measures	Performance Standard	Data Collection	Result
Assessment of Senior thesis papers (direct) and assessment of papers for TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World (majors only)	Students (at least ½) demonstrate the ability to relate learning of their TRS 2 courses (especially 270, 271, 272, 280 and 381) with their final paper sequences as they related to systematic theological issues of faith and reason. Rubric for this outcome used with hope that ½ would reach 3.5/4.0	Both papers were written with Dr. Doyle for Senior Seminar. No students completed TRS 451. Doyle did the assessment. One paper scored all fours on the rubric, the other paper scored 3.3/4.0	One paper was excellent and scored a 4.0/4.0 for this outcome. The other paper scored a 3.3/4.0 because it struggled with the theological interpretation of the history of the church though the scholarly method used was appropriate.
Review of Graduate Student responses and exit interviews (indirect)	Students demonstrate the ability to analyze their program and see this as a fundamental outcome	We had no GSS. Doyle did the exit survey of one of two students. Other refused to be interviewed.	Student interviewed reported this was the most interesting aspect of the program and she is glad she was pushed to think of the relationship of faith and reason.

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?*

We are doing well with this outcome. The results would have been more positive if one student had remained healthy

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

Not at this time

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.)

Appendix: Rubric developed for TRS 451 and 499 papers

<p>Ethics: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimensions of the self and the individual's role in establishing a just community.</p>				
	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Attempt that fails

The paper/presentation/project establishes control of moral issues through a focused thesis, hypothesis, or theme that engages complex ideas without oversimplifying or distorting them.	4	3	2	1
Relevant material (and only relevant material) is included; summary and narrative, if included, are used appropriately and effectively.	4	3	2	1
The paper appropriately references scriptural material if appropriate	4	3	2	1
The paper effectively employs materials drawn from historical and/or contemporary sources of theology or religious studies.	4	3	2	1

Faith and Reason: Students will demonstrate an awareness of the dialogue between faith and reason	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Attempt that fails
The paper recognizes and appropriately addresses issues regarding biblical accounts of creation and scientific theories.	4	3	2	1
The paper explains and defends the position that theology is a science.	4	3	2	1
The paper takes a coherent position with a tenable defense of the relationship of faith and reason.	4	3	2	1