



Actions Taken As a Result of Assessment

Department / Program / Unit / Activity: Department of Philosophy

Date submitted: June 06, 2011

1. Outcome/objective/goal reviewed:

Graduating Philosophy majors will be able to make oral presentations that adequately reconstruct and offer critical evaluations of arguments from philosophical texts. Graduating majors will also be able to formulate philosophical questions in seminar discussions and presentations.

2. Changes made since the last time this goal was reviewed: (If this was the first time this goal was reviewed skip to question 4.)

The Philosophy Department reviewed the philosophical research goal in the fall term, 2007, as part of its annual evaluation procedure. At that time, 85.7% [n=7] of graduating majors received positive reports on their abilities to make successful oral presentations in at least three seminars/history courses. No changes were recommended at that time.

3. What prompted those changes? (previous assessment results, discussions with colleagues, etc) Were the changes effective?

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4. After reviewing the assessment results the department/program/unit has decided to:

- Stay the course and continue to monitor; we're satisfied that this goal is being met
- Monitor the results and investigate causes; we may need to make changes in the future; we don't have enough information to make an informed decision yet
- Make changes (list below)
- Other: The Assessment Committee recommends that the Department consider strategies for improving the number of exit surveys returned.

Comments:

The Philosophy Department will discuss this assessment report at its first meeting of the fall term. At that time, we'll make firm decisions about what actions to take, if any. The assessment committee is pleased with the results of the evaluation and is not recommending any changes.

The Department's assessment committee evaluated the quality of our students' ability to make oral presentations based on several factors. One factor consisted of reports by six faculty members about presentations delivered in their courses in 2010-11 by Philosophy majors. Here are synopses of the six reports:

1. Dr. Fouke reported on four students in his Hume Seminar. One student did not prepare well. He was inarticulate and got off topic frequently. A second student demonstrated mastery of the text, but his speaking style was not polished. A third student performed very well. He showed mastery of difficult material, and his presentation was clear and engaging. A fourth student gave a presentation on two consecutive days. On day 1 the presentation was very good, but the second day's presentation was rather poorly done. The student apparently couldn't recall the relevant details on the second day.

2. Dr. Velasquez reported on a student's presentation in his Social Philosophy class. The presentation was excellent. He presented the material clearly, confidently, and passionately. He used Power Point slides effectively. He demonstrated very good grasp of the material; he even asked probing, critical questions.

3. Dr. Poe reported on a student who gave oral presentations every two weeks in an independent study course. The student made good connections between the independent study material and material taken up in a previous course. His presentations were done confidently and effectively.

4. Dr. Johnson reported on a student who gave a presentation in her Philosophy and Cultural Diversity course. He did excellent research and applied the philosophical materials from the course well. Although his Power Point slides were well-done, the timing of his remarks needed improvement.

5. Dr. Whisnant reported on four presentations delivered in her Sexual Ethics Seminar. Three of these were two-membered team presentations. One presentation was lively. The student engaged with the material well. A second student made several mistakes with the material and wasn't selective enough in her summaries of philosophers' essays. A third student engaged with complex material in a sophisticated way, although she didn't speak with confidence. A fourth student made a couple of mistakes attributing views to particular philosophers, and some of her questions were too vague.

6. Dr. Richards reported on two students who each gave approximately six short presentations in his Metaphysics Seminar. One student's presentations were uniformly excellent. He knew the material well and he explained difficult material with well-chosen examples. He was confident, and he answered questions well. A second student presented with confidence and enthusiasm, but his grasp of the material was oftentimes inaccurate.

A second factor used by the Department's Assessment Committee concerned

presentations given by majors at conferences. We received one report of a sophomore Philosophy major who gave a presentation at a professional humanities conference. According to Dr. Poe, who attended the conference, the student presented her ideas well, and responded to questions effectively, but she didn't back up her ideas with enough relevant philosophical theory. Considering the student is only a sophomore, the presentation was quite good.

A third factor used by the Assessment Committee was exit surveys from graduating seniors. We only managed to collect two exit surveys. On the statement, "The major in Philosophy has improved my ability to make oral presentations that adequately reconstruct arguments from philosophical texts and that offer critical evaluations of those arguments", one student responded with "Agree" and one with "Strongly Agree".

5. Changes to goal itself –

After working with this particular goal the department/program/unit has decided to:

- Keep the wording of this goal as is and keep the same measures
- Keep the wording of this goal but use different measures next time (list below)
- Keep these same measures but change the wording of the goal (list below)
- Change the wording of the goal *and* change the measures used (list below)
- Drop this goal entirely (list reason below)

Comments:

The Department Assessment Committee decided not to attach the reports on student work in order to protect students' privacy.