

Department of Philosophy
Indiana University South Bend

ASSESSMENT PLAN

I. Identifiable Measurable Educational Goals

At the completion of the major program:

- Students will be reflective and inquiring.
- Students will be skilled in logical and critical thinking.
- Students will be familiar with major philosophers from several periods in the history of philosophy.
- Students will express themselves effectively in philosophical writing; they will, for example, be able to recognize and cogently describe philosophical issues.
- Students will have a sense of connection between the study of philosophy and their personal goals; they will, for example, be able to apply ideas from the study of philosophy to ethical dilemmas and other practical concerns.

II. Methodology for Measuring the Attainment of Educational Goals

When students are advised, when they evaluate their courses and instructors, when they participate in departmental colloquia or discussion groups, when their work is reviewed prior to the department's selection of its annual award for excellence -- each of these occasions provides information that the department uses in order to assess its program. For each student, the process culminates in one of two assessment options.

A. Two Assessment Options

Having two different assessment strategies benefits both students and the department and provides flexibility in how assessment is accomplished. Students should make their choice known at the beginning of the senior year and make arrangements with the department chair for completing the assessment option chosen sometime within the senior year.

1. Proseminar Project. The student enrolls in the department's senior proseminar (P495) in order to pursue a substantial writing project (1-4 credit hours) under the supervision of a full-time faculty member. The purpose of the proseminar project is to produce a paper (or a significant revision of an earlier paper) that is researched and formulated in a manner suitable for public presentation. Students selecting this option have to meet the project expectations of their committee and present their paper to the IUSB Philosophy Colloquium (or to some other suitable group or forum). The student's performance under this option is based on both the paper and the presentation, and a

minimum grade of C is expected for the student's work in the proseminar to be an indication of a satisfactory rating of the major program for the purpose of assessment. This option requires significant research, supervised writing, and public presentation. Provided this requirement is met, the department is open to alternative ways of pursuing the proseminar option. The department encourages, but does not require, all majors to pursue this option, especially majors who plan to go to graduate or professional school. The proseminar option depends upon the willingness of faculty members to teach occasional unpaid overloads.

2. Portfolio. The student submits a portfolio of three or more papers. Each portfolio is read and evaluated by all full-time faculty members, with one faculty member taking special responsibility for evaluating each student. The point of the portfolio is not just to collect and evaluate examples of a student's best work but also to help the student achieve a larger perspective on his or her work in philosophy and to provide specific guidelines for further progress. The portfolio is the basis for a thorough review of the student's work and achievements during his or her undergraduate career. This review is communicated at a final meeting between the student and the department. This meeting serves as a bilateral exit interview. It provides an occasion for a thorough exchange of evaluative observations and constructive recommendations between the faculty and the student.

III. Process for using assessment information to improve program.

After the Proseminar presentation or bilateral exit interview, the faculty prepares a written summary of each student's level of accomplishment, indicating the extent to which the student has met the expected outcomes listed above. Suggestions from students about how the philosophy curriculum or assessment process might be improved are noted and action, if appropriate, is taken.

IV. Participation of all constituencies.

All full-time department members participate in the bilateral exit interview and subsequent report writing. Students are actively involved in the process, through their comments in the bilateral exit interview.

V. Record keeping.

The department chair serves as liaison to the Assessment Committee. Electronic files are kept on the Philosophy Shared drive and hard copies are kept in the department office.