Degree/Certificate: BA

Major/Option: Philosophy

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Date: October 4, 2013

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2012-13

Part I – for the 2012-13 academic year.

1. **Student Learning Outcome:**

   “Students understand the main doctrines and evaluate the arguments that underpin the ancient, modern, and contemporary periods of thought.”

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

   _____ SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;
   _____ SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;
   __X___ SLO met without change required

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

The assessment method focused on the performance of students enrolled in PHIL 322-77: Contemporary History of Western Philosophy during the Spring quarter of 2013. The instructor was Dr. Terrance MacMullan. This was the 6th time that MacMullan had taught this class at EWU. The instructor assessed the students’ ability to understand the main doctrines and arguments of the dominant schools of philosophical thought of the 19th and 20th centuries (which is what philosophers mean by “contemporary philosophy”) using the metric of a comprehensive final exam that required students to write four essays in which the summarized key philosophical doctrines and demonstrated an understanding of how the different philosophers of the period variously influenced, expanded or disagreed with each other. This metric was used to assess this particular SLO as it was designed to assess the students’ retention and understanding of the primary philosophical arguments and traditions pertaining to this historical period. This assessment tool can be compared to past student performance from previous sections of the class taught by the same instructor.
4. **Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.
   a. Findings: 28 of the 29 students enrolled completed the final exam (one student left the class for personal reasons and received a final grade of “incomplete.”) The exam was graded on a range of 0-40 points. The grade breakdown is as follows:
   - 40: 5 students
   - 39: 4 students
   - 38: 12 students
   - 37: 2 students
   - 36: 2 students
   - 35: 1 student
   - 33: 1 student
   - 31: 1 student

   The average grade: 37.75 (or 94.37%) is a marked improvement over previous average student performance on the same exam from Spring 2011 which was 35.83 (or 89.58%).

   b. Analysis of findings: Having discussed the findings with other members of the faculty, reviewed student comments from the formal evaluations (where students gave the course content an average score of 4.54/5) and compared them to past student performance, we find that the evaluated students enrolled in this class overwhelmingly met the student learning objective mentioned above.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**
   a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

   As it is the case that the students continue to satisfactorily meet the Philosophy learning objectives, there are no current plans to change any elements related to student learning in this class.

   b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

   Again, there is no need to changes, so there is no timeline for curricular changes.

6. **Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.**

   None are needed at this time.
NEW: PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP
FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2011-12 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

In response to the university’s accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, this section has been added. This should be viewed as a follow up to the previous year’s findings. In other words, begin with findings from 2011-12, and then describe actions taken during 2012-13 to improve student learning along, provide a brief summary of findings, and describe possible next steps.

**Working definition for closing the loop:** Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning.” Adapted 8.21.13 from [http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html](http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html).

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2011-12**

   “Students will be able to critically analyze, using logic and other tools, the consistency and verifiability of their own beliefs and the beliefs of others, as well as engage in reasoned public deliberation challenging those beliefs.”

2. **Strategies implemented** during 2012-13 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2011-12 assessment activities.

   While it was suggested as a result of the 2011-12 assessment that most students need additional instruction and a rubric for peer review in Introduction to Philosophy, it was also noted after the assessment was submitted that peer review assignments do not “engage [students] in reasoned public deliberation challenging those beliefs.” Therefore, another type of instruction that addresses the entire SLO is necessary.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.

   Based on the shortfalls of the peer review assignment used in 2011-12, the instructor proposes to use a version of the “Widening Circles” exercise found in the text by Josina M. Makau, Debian L. Marty, entitled Cooperative Argumentation. In this exercise, students answer a question on paper that requires a creating a personal theory or response. Students are arranged into groups of four, then each person reads their written answer as well as responding to the prompt from three other perspectives:
• from the perspective of a person whose views are very different and even adversarial on the topic, introducing themselves and speaking as this person, using the pronoun “I”;
• from the viewpoint of a nonhuman being that is involved or affected by that particular situation;
• in the voice of a future human whose life will be directly affected by the choices made now on the issue.

4. What further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

The instructor of Introduction to Philosophy in spring 2012 (Decker) will implement the suggested changes in (3) above when he returns to full-time teaching in fall 2014.
Definitions:

1. **Student Learning Outcome**: The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome**: This checklist informs the reader whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

3. **Strategies and methods used to gather student performance data**, including assessment instruments used, and a description of how and when the assessments were conducted. Examples of strategies/methods: embedded test questions in a course or courses, portfolios, in-class activities, standardized test scores, case studies, analysis of written projects, etc. Additional information could describe the use of rubrics, etc. as part of the assessment process.

4. **Observations gathered from data**: This section includes findings and analyses based on the above strategies and methods, and provides data to substantiate the distinction made in #2. For that reason this section has been divided into parts (a) and (b) to provide space for both the findings and the analysis of findings.

5. **Program changes based on the assessment results**: This section is where the program lists plans to improve student learning, based on assessment findings, and provides a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year. Programs often find assessment is part of an ongoing process of continual improvement.

6. **Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed.**
   Evaluation of the assessment plan and process itself: what worked in the assessment planning and process, what did not, and why.

Some elements of this document have been drawn or adapted from the University of Massachusetts’ assessment handbook, “Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement” (2001). Retrieved from http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf