

**CHICO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**ASSESSMENT SUMMARY UPDATE**

**PROGRAM: BA in Philosophy**

<b>Year of review</b>	<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Describe assessment activity done this year for this SLO</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Based on the results or evidence, what action was taken regarding program improvements?</b>
<b>2012 – 2013</b>	SLO 2: Be aware of developments in contemporary philosophy.	Assessment of papers and tests from two courses for the major with a strong writing component: Phil 108 (Philosophical Methods) and Phil 420, one of the WP courses (Contemporary moral theory). In addition, data was considered from a survey handed out to the majors in Spring 2012.	42 percent of students performing at the "polished" level, 34 percent at the "adequate" level, and 25 percent at the "poor" level. The last two cases suggest either a lack of desirable awareness of developments in contemporary philosophy, or an inability to, or lack of opportunity to, express that awareness given the parameters of the courses they were enrolled in.	Discussion will take place at our next department meeting, and in emails about ways to encourage students to engage with contemporary research.
<b>2013 – 2014</b>	SLO 7: Students should be able to compose an essay in philosophy that demonstrates clear thought, depth of understanding, ability to apply philosophical methods, and mastery of relevant writing skills.	This SLO was viewed as a sort of "capstone" SLO for the program. For that reason, faculty focused on student writing in the upper-division courses of the major, mainly those populated by graduating seniors. In fact, two-thirds of the students in the sample graduated in the spring.	Using the rubric that was designed for this SLO, term papers from the students in the sample were assessed according to the levels of "Poor," "Adequate," and "Polished." No papers were found to be poor. 42 percent were "Polished," and 58 percent were "Adequate."	The Program just completed its five year review this year. And after running through the "cycle" of our seven SLOs, it is good to see our students doing well in this capstone SLO. But through the assessment process in previous years, some concerns about writing in the major emerged: a redesign of the major is forthcoming, and part of the action plan in the five year review is a reconsideration of our SLOs, our rubrics, and our program mission statement.

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2014 – 2015	SLO 6: Be able to employ standard methods of philosophical research, including awareness of print and electronic resources	For assessment of this SLO, sample student papers were taken, randomly, from two courses in which students are required to write what are considered research papers (not just term papers). A total of 14 papers overall were assessed. Basically, these are papers that must include discussions of works not on the course syllabus. A rubric was used to assess these writing samples.	The assessment found that the extent of the research done by students was mostly minimal; 42 percent performed poorly, 29 percent adequately, and 29 percent were proficient, according to the specifications of the rubric used.	Assessment of this SLO happened in the first place because of perceptions about inadequacies surrounding what is meant by, and what we expect from, a student research paper. Assessment this year confirmed the impression the program is not doing enough to make students aware of these expectations...probably due to a lack of awareness among faculty about how classes actually require research papers.
2015 – 2016	SLO 6 (reassessment): Students should be able to employ standard methods of philosophical research, including awareness of print and electronic resources	For the assessment of this SLO, a survey was designed and distributed to students in PHIL 302 (Modern Philosophy) in the spring semester of 2016. Eleven students in the major and minor completed the survey: this represents nearly half of the total students in our major/minor programs.	We were interest in employing an indirect method of assessment this year to look closely at students' perception of their own learning, particularly their research and writing skills. The assessment found that overall, students seem to be satisfied with the perceived quality of their writing and research skills (i.e., 55% strongly agreed and 45% agreed). However, the survey results also showed that most students understand by "philosophical	We have added an extra course that will include a research paper requirement (it goes live spring 2017) and two faculty members are developing clear guidelines for students in the relevant (3) classes on what we expect a research paper in philosophy to be doing. Also the development of smaller, shorter assignments with research as its goal or key focus is going to be encouraged.

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			<p>research” something along the lines of applying and practicing critical thinking. From the evidence we’ve seen in the past, students are not doing much of the kind of philosophical research we expect of them to be doing, and this could in part be due to the fact that they THINK they are doing “philosophical research” when they are not.</p>	
<p><b>2016 – 2017</b></p>	<p>SLO 1: Students should be able to explain theories and arguments of major philosophers, and do so in major areas of philosophy (e.g., logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and social and political philosophy).</p>	<p>For the assessment of this SLO, we collected 15 student papers from 2 different class in Spring 2017 (PHIL 384: Aesthetics, PHIL 361: Metaphysics); this represents roughly half of the students who have declared the major. We used a previously established rubric to assess student performance.</p>	<p>Of the 15 papers assessed, 6 were adequate, and 9 were polished. None were in the poor category.</p>	<p>No specific action was taken regarding program improvement. Not surprisingly, our program saw a good degree of success with this SLO. It could be argued that this is in fact an SLO that applies to absolutely every course in the major, one that our students are being instructed in in every class. So, we should see results like this. The question this raises is: when would we want/expect to see an even higher “polished” rate? Now that we have a senior capstone seminar, which students are taking their last semester before graduating, work in that course will be used to assess this SLO in the future, with the expectation that we should see even better performance in this category.</p>