Department of Philosophy
University of New Mexico
Undergraduate Programs
Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

A. College, Department and Date

1. College: College of Arts and Sciences
2. Department: Philosophy
3. Date: 9 January 2009

B. Academic Program of Study
B.A., English-Philosophy

C. Contact Person(s) for the Assessment Plan
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D. Broad Program Goals & Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

1. Broad Program Learning Goals for the B.A. degrees in Philosophy

As indicated in the descriptions we include in the UNM Catalog, completion of any one of our four majors will enhance the liberal arts experience for UNM undergraduates and help prepare them for their post-baccalaureate pursuits.   Regardless of which major option our students elect to pursue, our general goal is to deepen their knowledge of philosophy, teach them skills that will be an asset to them whatever their chosen career paths may be, and instill in them values that will help them to become life-long learners.

Knowledge: We want all our graduates to have a broad knowledge of both the history of philosophy and the different problem areas of philosophy (such as ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology). By the end of their course of study, they should be aware of issues that have motivated and continue to motivate philosophical debate. Such issues include (but are not limited to): the existence of God, the justification for religious belief, the nature and grounds and human knowledge, the existence and nature of the self, the possibility of free will, the nature and requirements of morality, and the nature and origin of political authority and social justice. These are issues that are covered quite generally in a standard one-semester PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy course, but upon completion of any one of our majors, students should have a deeper appreciation for why these questions persist in philosophical discourse as well as for the strategies (of past and present) that philosophers adopt to address these core philosophical problems.

Skills: There are three fundamental skills we want all our majors to master: critical reading, persuasive writing, and critical thinking.

In regard to developing the ability to read critically, we want our students to be able to follow complex, sustained reasoning about the theoretical problems philosophers find important, and to appreciate the scientific, historical, and cultural significance of those problems.

In regard to developing critical thinking skills, we want our students to be able to approach any given argument or text with a critical eye and assess the merits of the claims being made. Doing so effectively requires that they are able to identify what the author is asserting and what explicit and implicit assumptions he/she is making, analyze the argument the author develops to support his/her claim, assess whether the author's argument actually supports the conclusion he/she wants to draw, and determine whether there are good reasons to deny the truth of the claims the author is forwarding.

In regard to their writing skills, all our majors are asked to compose persuasive argument essays throughout the course of their study. Their general goal is to learn how to clearly and convincingly argue for a stated position. In our lower division courses, such as PHIL 156: Reasoning and Critical Thinking, students may be asked to defend their views on abortion or the death penalty, while in our upper division courses, students will more likely be asked to defend a particular interpretation of a historical text or critically engage with the ideas forwarded by a central figure in the history of philosophy. Whatever the specific task before them, effectively crafting an argument will require that students clearly present the position they are critiquing *and* lay out clear and convincing reasons that will persuade their reader of their own stated position.

Values: Philosophy literally means "the love of wisdom." The highest goal of a philosophical education is to awaken such a love in students. We want our students to become true learners – curious, independent, inquiring minds eager to explore the world and to identify and examine assumptions in their own and others' thinking. There should be nothing they do not want to know about. They should not have to rely on others setting goals for them; they should set their own learning goals. They should take responsibility for their own learning.

Learning goal specific to the B.A. in English-Philosophy

Those students opting to pursue the philosophy major with a concentration in English-Philosophy have a great deal of freedom in directing the course of their studies. They must take six courses in English, six courses in Philosophy, and two additional upper division courses in either English or Philosophy. By completing this broad range of courses from two different departments, our goal for the students is that they deepen their appreciation for the relationship between these two fields. Thus, when we advise students on which philosophy courses they should take to complete this degree, we urge them to take courses that touch on a wide variety of philosophical problem areas and a wide variety of historical eras. Our hope is that a broad knowledge of philosophy and its history will grant our students a view of the different formats in which philosophy has been written – from the dialogues of Plato to the aphorisms of Nietzsche to the more standard essay style of contemporary philosophy – in order for them to better appreciate the way in which prose style may or may not influence the effectiveness with which a philosopher defends his/her ideas. This particular question is that is often addressed in ENGP 480: Philosophy and Literature, a course that our English-Philosophy students are required to take for the major. The course is dedicated in general to the interplay between literature and philosophy, and students completing this course should come away with a deeper appreciation for how these two fields have continued and can continue to inform each other.

2. List of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for B.A. in English-Philosophy

A.1. Students can explain the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

A.2. Students can outline the history of philosophy from ancient to modern times, identifying its major periods, movements, and figures.

A.3. Students can give a general account of the thought of at least one systematic philosopher in the history of philosophy and explain at least some of his/her views in depth.

B.1. Students can represent the logical structure of an argument.

B.2. Students can write a philosophical essay, explicating a philosophical idea or argument, evaluating its soundness and persuasiveness, and developing a counter-position.

B.3. Students can articulate their own thoughts clearly in philosophical discussion and in writing.

C.1. Students can articulate the meaning of philosophy for their own lives.

Student learning outcome specific to B.A. in English-Philosophy

EnP.1. Students can give a general account of how philosophy and literature have mutually informed and influenced each other.

E. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Relationship to UNM Student Learning Goals (insert the program SLOs and check all that apply):

University of New Mexico Student Learning Goals				
Program SLOs	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility	Program SLO is conceptually different from university goals.
A.1. Students can explain the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.	X			
A.3. Students can give a general account of the thought of at least one systematic philosopher in the history of philosophy and explain at least some of his/her views in depth.	X			
B.2. Students can write a philosophical essay, explicating a philosophical idea or argument, evaluating its soundness and persuasiveness, and developing a counter-position.		X		
B.3. Students can articulate their own thoughts clearly in philosophical discussion and in writing.		X		
C.1. Students can articulate the meaning of philosophy for their own lives.			X	
EnP.1. Students can give a general account of how philosophy and literature have mutually informed and influenced each other.	X			

2. How will learning outcomes be assessed?
   A. <u>What</u>:
      i. *For each SLO, briefly describe the means of assessment, i.e., what samples of evidence of learning will be gathered or measures used to assess students' accomplishment of the learning outcomes in the three- year plan?*

The Philosophy Department faculty has identified two kinds of measurement tools as most useful in assessing the achievement of the above-described learning objectives among our philosophy majors: **(1) Portfolios**, i.e., sets of writing assignments that individual students completed for the required courses for the major, and **(2) Exit Interviews**.

By way of justification of (1) and (2): Writing and speaking are the two media of philosophy. Every philosophy course places a premium on the ability to express one's own ideas, analyze others' ideas, and develop persuasive arguments in both writing and philosophical discourse. The mastery of important philosophical theories and the systems of the great figures in the history of philosophy is exhibited primarily not by "objective tests," which rarely bring the creativity of students into play, but by the ability to articulate and reflect on them in writing. Thus, throughout the curriculum for each of our majors students are constantly being asked to write papers (varying in length, but the 4-5 page paper remains the standard). One of the most straightforward ways to measure the level of education of our students at any given time is, thus, to survey a collection of papers they have written. Meanwhile, they are also asked, throughout the curriculum, to develop the skills of articulating and defending positions, as well as respectfully critiquing the positions of others, in class discussion. The best way to measure these kinds of skills is to engage graduating seniors in some kind of philosophical discussion and observe how well they do. Thus, the measurement tools identified – portfolios and exit interviews – seem most apt for measuring the kinds of objectives we have set for our students.

SLOs A.1, A.3, B.1, B.2, B.3
(1) Portfolios. We will ask select students to compile portfolios of what they believe to be their best 3-4 papers from required courses for the major. For the English-Philosophy major: PHIL 201 or 202, 352 or 354 or 358, one elective, and 480.

We will also ask that students submitting portfolios to provide (1) their GPA in the Philosophy major, (2) their overall GPA from courses taken at UNM, and if they are willing, (3) a one-page reflection on their experience writing papers for Philosophy courses at UNM. In their reflection we would ask students to judge whether their experience in courses required for the Philosophy major helped them develop as writers.

SLOs A.1, A.2, B.3, C.1, and EnP.1
(2) Exit Interviews. The purpose of the interview will be two-fold:

(a) To collect information about the student's experiences in the undergraduate Philosophy program and learn, in particular,
- which courses the student deemed his/her favorite and least favorite, and why;
- which courses the student felt he/she learned the most in, and why;
- in what ways the student thinks the Philosophy program or our individual courses could be improved.

(b) To assess the ability of the student to discourse about philosophical topics.
For example, in the course of the interview the faculty interviewing the student will attempt to engage him/her in discussions about some of the most interesting ideas and theories he/she

encountered during his/her course of study, and observe how proficient the student is at articulating his/her own thoughts, outlining philosophical views/positions, and reflecting on those views/positions.

ii. *Indicate whether each measure is **direct** or **indirect***.

Portfolios: Direct measure
Exit Interview: Direct measure

iii. *Briefly describe the **criteria for success** related to each direct or indirect means of assessment. What is the program's performance target (e.g., is an "acceptable or better" performance by 60% of students on a given measure acceptable to the program faculty)? If scoring rubrics are used to define qualitative criteria and measure performance, attach them to the plan as they are available.*

Portfolios: Papers included in student portfolios will be assessed according to the scoring rubric that is currently used for assessing assignments in our general education courses (namely, PHIL 101, 156, 201, and 202). Our expectation, of course, is that our majors will have scores higher than those collected from our general education courses. We will use the average scores from our core curriculum courses as a baseline, and success will be measured by the percentage of our majors who score higher than the Gen Ed average. Our target is to have at least 60% of the student portfolios score above the baseline.

Exit Interview: Student performance during the interview will be assessed using the interview assessment sheet (included below in Appendix 2). There are six items listed, and students can earn a score from 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (excellent). Our target is to have average scores fall between 3 (good) and 4 (excellent) for at least 2/3 of the questions, i.e., for four out of the six items listed on the rubric.

B. <u>Who</u>:   State explicitly whether the program's assessment will include evidence from all students in the program or a sample. Address the validity of any proposed sample of students.

Portfolio Review: Each year that we evaluate portfolios, we will identify 4-8 students who 1) will either graduate that year or the following year, 2) have taken almost all of the coursework for the major, and 3) are willing to compile portfolios of what they believe to be their best 3-4 papers from required courses for the major.

Exit Interview: Each year that we conduct exit interviews, we will identify a different 4-8 students who 1) will either graduate that year or the following year, and 2) have taken almost all of the coursework for the major.

The Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for Philosophy will be in charge of identifying the students who will submit portfolios and participate in exit interviews. Since the process is entirely voluntary, the OA Coordinator will either solicit students by (1) sending a request for volunteers to the PHILMAJORS listserv or (2) by visiting sections of the 400-level courses required for the major (viz., for the English-Philosophy major, ENGP 480) and request volunteers.

3. When will learning outcomes be assessed? When and in what forum will the results of the assessment be discussed?

As indicated in the table below, each major will be evaluated over the course of one academic year, beginning with the general Philosophy major in AY 09-10. The first semester of assessment will be dedicated to an evaluation of portfolios and the second semester will be dedicated to an evaluation of exit interviews. Given the relatively low number of students majoring in Economics-Philosophy and English-Philosophy, we will assess these programs during the same year. According to our proposed schedule, each major will have a comprehensive evaluation every 5 years. During those years in which we evaluate one of our major programs, the department as a whole (i.e., all full-time faculty members) will evaluate the findings gathered during the previous academic year at the first faculty meeting of the academic year.

		Philosophy	Pre-Law	Econ-Phil	English-Phil
Year 1 08-09	Fall 08	Develop rubrics			
	Spring 09	Collect Portfolios			
Year 2 09-10	Fall 09	Portfolio Review Sept 2009 SLOs A.1, A.3, B.2, B.3 Due 15 Sept 2009			
	Spring 10	Exit Interviews March 2010 SLOs A.1, C.1, P.1 Due 15 April 2010			
Year 3 10-11	Fall 10		Departmental discussion of assessment results; Revise rubrics as needed		
	Spring 11		Collect Portfolios		
Year 4 11-12	Fall 11		Portfolio Review Sept 2011 SLOs A.1, A.3, B.2, B.3 Due 15 Sept 2010		
	Spring 12		Exit Interviews March 2012 SLOs A.1, C.1, PL.1, PL.2 Due 15 April 2012		
Year 5 12-13	Fall 12			Departmental discussion of assessment results; Revise rubrics as needed	Departmental discussion of assessment results; Revise rubrics as needed
	Spring 13			Collect Portfolios	Collect Portfolios
Year 6 13-14	Fall 13			Portfolio Review Sept 2013 SLOs A.1, A.3, B.2, B.3 Due 15 Sept 2013	Portfolio Review Sept 2013 SLOs A.1, A.3, B.2, B.3 Due 15 Sept 2013
	Spring 14			Exit Interviews March 2014 SLOs A.1, C.1, EcP.1 Due 15 April 2014	Exit Interviews March 2014 SLOs A.1, C.1, EnP.1 Due 15 April 2014

4. **What is the unit's process to analyze/interpret assessment data and use results to improve student learning?**

   Briefly describe:

   1. *Who will participate in the assessment process (the gathering of evidence, the analysis/interpretation, recommendations).*

      Portfolios

      In a specified spring semester, beginning spring 2009, the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for Philosophy (currently Mary Domski) will collect 5-10 student portfolios from students who meet the criteria outlined above.

      At the beginning of the following fall semester, a committee of no less than three people will convene to assess the collected portfolios. At least two members will be full-time faculty; the third member could either be a graduate student or a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy.

      The committee will assess the papers included in student portfolios according to the same scoring rubric that is currently used for assessing assignments in our general education courses (namely, PHIL 101, 156, 201, and 202). Our expectation, of course, is that our majors will have scores higher than those collected from our general education courses.

      Each faculty member will individually assess all the papers, and in addition, each faculty member will give each portfolio an overall assessment based on the scores generated using the rubric. See Appendix 1 for the rubric and portfolio scoring sheet. The committee will then convene and draft a report on the students' performance that will be presented to the faculty as a whole at a departmental meeting prior to 15 September.

      Exit Interviews

      A committee of no less than three people will convene to conduct exit interviews during a specified spring semester, ideally in March. At least two members will be full-time faculty; the third member could either be a graduate student or a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy.

      Each committee member will individually assess the student's performance during the interview using the interview assessment sheet (included below in Appendix 4). The committee will then convene and, based on the collected data, complete a report detailing what was learned from the interviews. The report will be completed by 15 April and presented to the faculty at the final faculty meeting of the spring semester.

   2. *the process for consideration of the implications of assessment for change:*
      a. to assessment mechanisms themselves,
      b. to curriculum design,
      c. to pedagogy
      …in the interest of improving student learning.

      At the first faculty meeting of the following academic year, the department as a whole will examine the data collected from the student portfolios and interviews and the reports compiled by the portfolio and exit interview committees. We will use this data and the committee recommendations as we consider possible revisions to (1) the rubrics used for the Philosophy major assessment, (2) the curriculum for the Philosophy major, and (3) the assignments and methods we use in the courses required for our major.

3. How, when, and to whom will recommendations be communicated?
If the department recommends changes to the rubrics used for the Philosophy major assessment, these will be communicated to the department's Outcomes Assessment Coordinator, either during a faculty meeting or by other means (e.g., via email) sometime after our first faculty meeting of the year. Any recommended changes to the curriculum for our majors will be communicated to the department Chair, again, either during a faculty meeting or by other means (e.g., via email) sometime after our first faculty meeting of the year. Possible changes in pedagogy will have to be considered by full-time faculty members and also communicated to other instructors in our department sometime after our first faculty meeting of the year.

Appendix 1:
Rubric for evaluating papers included in student portfolios

Phil. core course paper rubric	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Not acceptable
1. Comprehension of main idea of subject position	The student articulates the main idea (thesis) of the subject position clearly and precisely in his/her own words, in a way that enables the reader to comprehend it easily.	The student articulates the main idea of the subject position in his/her own words so that the reader can comprehend it with minimal effort.	The student articulates the main idea of the subject position partially; he/she formulates it in his/her own words but must to a significant extent rely on the language of the author.	The student does not articulate the main idea of the position.
2. Comprehension of main reasons in support of subject position	The essay identifies the main reasons the author uses in supporting his/her position in a way that enables the reader to see their plausibility.	The student identifies the main reasons the author uses ... in his/her own words.	The student identifies the main reasons ... partially in his/her own words; he/she must to a significant extent rely on the language of the text.	The student does not identify the main reasons the author uses in supporting his/her position.
3. Analysis of argument	The student presents the author's argument for the subject position in a way that illuminates its structure. He/she identifies all the premises, formulating them in his/her own words. He/she provides support for the premises.	The student identifies all the premises, reformulated in his/her own words, so that they entail the conclusion; he/she provides evidential support for the premises	The student identifies some of the premises. He/she must rely to a significant extent on the author's words; he/she provides evidential support for some of the premises.	The student identifies none or only a few of the premises. He/she does not provide support for the premises.

4. Language	The student uses philosophical terminology correctly. He/she writes clearly and precisely so that the reader is able to follow his/her meaning easily, and makes no obscure, nonsensical, or incoherent statements. His/her statements are consistent with each other.	The student uses philosophical terminology correctly. He/she writes so that the reader is able to follow his/her meaning with minimal effort. He/she occasionally makes obscure statements but no nonsensical or incoherent ones. His/her statements are consistent.	The student mostly uses philosophical terminology correctly. He/she writes so that the reader is able to follow with some effort. He/she occasionally makes nonsensical or incoherent statements. His/her statements are sometimes inconsistent.	The student does not use philosophical terminology correctly. He/she writes so that the reader has difficulty following the meaning. He/she frequently employs obscure/ nonsensical/incoherent expressions. His/her statements are inconsistent and contradictory.
5. Critique	The student raises "interesting" – i.e., cogent, challenging – objections to the subject position and the argument(s) for it, which are supported fully.	The student raises objections to the position and argument(s) that are at least partially supported.	The student makes observations about the subject position and argument(s) that could be developed as objections.	The student does not raise objections to the subject position and argument(s).
6. Developing a counter-position	The student develops his/her own position on the problem that either modifies the subject position and argument(s) in light of the objections raised or is a new proposal. The proposal is clearly stated and supported by a plausible argument whose premises are well supported.	The student partially develops his/her own position. He/she articulates it clearly and presents an argument for it, but the argument is not as strong or well supported.	The student coherently articulates a counter-position but does not develop an argument for it.	The student does not articulate a counter-position at all, or does not do so coherently.

7. Creativity	The student is *thinking*, i.e., seriously examining and testing theories and concepts. He/she has to some extent broken free from conventional ideas/solutions and presents a perspective that is new and illuminating for the reader. The essay exhibits mastery of language and style.	The student is thinking, though not with the same depth or originality. The essay exhibits flashes of mastery of language and style.	The essay shows some degree of either depth and originality of thought or mastery of language and style.	The essay shows no attempt at serious thought or any mastery of language and style.

Appendix 2: Portfolio Scoring Sheet

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Paper 1 (Phil 201 or 202)							
Paper 2 (300-level requirement)							
Paper 3 (400-level major course)							
Average for each category							

Based on your evaluation of the portfolio, rate the student's overall performance in the following categories.

SLO A.1: Student can explain the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.
a. Student can explain one or more the main problems of metaphysics.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

b. Student can explain one or more the main problems of epistemology.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

c. Student can explain one or more the main problems of ethics.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO A.3: Student can give a general account of the thought of at least one systematic philosopher in the history of philosophy and explain at least some of his/her views in depth.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO B.2: Student can write a philosophical essay, explicating a philosophical idea or argument, evaluating its soundness and persuasiveness, and developing a counter-position.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO B.3: Students can articulate their own thoughts clearly in writing.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

Appendix 3:
Exit Interview Protocol for English-Philosophy Major

We anticipate that the exit interviews will take roughly 15-20 minutes to complete. The goal is for faculty to engage the student in a natural discussion about his/her experience in our program and gauge the student's proficiency in speaking about philosophy from his/her answers. Thus, the questions below are intended as a guide for conducting the interview rather than a rigid protocol.

1) Which Philosophy course was your favorite, and why?

2) Which Philosophy course helped you develop most as a thinker, and why?

3) Which Philosophy course helped you develop most as a writer, and why?

4) Did the material covered in the historical survey classes (namely, Phil 201 and Phil 202) help you better understand the contemporary problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and/or ethics, which were covered in Phil 358, Phil 352, and Phil 354, respectively?

5) What do you find to be the most pressing problem of contemporary philosophy?

6) Are there are any historical cases that you've studied which nicely illuminate how literature (in any of its many forms) can given rise to novel philosophical questions? Or conversely, are there any historical cases that you've studied which nicely illuminate how philosophical questions have influenced the development of literature (in any of its many forms)?

7) Are you considering pursuing a graduate degree in philosophy? If so, what problem or which philosopher would you like to focus your future research on? If not, in what ways do you think what you've gained from the philosophy major will inform your career aspirations?

8) What would you say has been the greatest benefit of completing the Philosophy major at UNM?

9) Are there ways in which you think the Philosophy program or any of our individual courses could be improved?

Appendix 4:
Exit Interview Assessment for English-Philosophy Major

Once the interview is complete, each faculty member on the review committee will rate the student's performance in the following categories.

SLO A.1: Student can explain the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

a. Student can explain one or more the main problems of metaphysics.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

b. Student can explain one or more the main problems of epistemology.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

c. Student can explain one or more the main problems of ethics.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO B.3: Student can articulate his/her own thoughts clearly in philosophical discussion.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO C.1: Student can articulate the meaning of philosophy for his/her own life.

g. Student connected the study of philosophy to his/her own life.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

SLO EnP.1: Students can give a general account of how philosophy and literature have mutually informed and influenced each other.

h. Student gave a general account of how philosophy and literature have mutually informed and influenced each other.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	
1	2	3	4	N/A

What changes, if any, did the student suggest for the English-Philosophy program?

What changes, if any, did the student suggest for individual courses?