

**Degree/Certificate:** BA

Major/Option: Philosophy

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Date: October 6, 2014

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2013-14

**Part I – for the 2013-14 academic year:** Because Deans have been asked to create College-Level Summary Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

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

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

**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;

SLO met without change required

1. **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 2014. The instructor was Dr. Terrance MacMullan. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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 they 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.

**Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

Findings: All 23 of the students enrolled in the Spring 2014 section of PHIL 322 completed the final exam. The exam was graded on a range of 0-40 points. The grade breakdown is as follows:

40: 1 student  
39: 8 students  
38: 4 students  
37: 6 students  
36: 4 students  
35: 0 students  
34: 1 student  
31: 1 student

The average grade: 37.67 out of 40 (or 94.17%) is nearly identical with last year's average score of 94.37% and is higher than the average score of the previous two years taught by this instructor, which is 91.97% .

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 4.59/5) 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.**

2. **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.

3. 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 2012-13 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 2012-13, and then describe actions taken during 2013-14 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>.

Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2012-13

**Strategies implemented** during 2013-14 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2012-13 assessment activities.

The SLO evaluated during the 2012-13 AY was:

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

The Method was to evaluate student performance on the comprehensive final exam for MacMullan's section of PHIL 322, as well as evaluating their formal evaluations of this class.

The findings were that students are meeting and exceeding this SLO and that no changes were necessary.

**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.

There were no special changes made to curriculum or pedagogy in light of the 2012-13 SLO assessment as the EWU philosophy instructors continue to maintain very high levels of academic excellence. It would be unproductive and unprofessional to implement changes just for the sake of saying we've made changes.

EWU philosophy instructors are already doing an excellent job of teaching their students. Each philosophy instructor already takes responsibility for adjusting pedagogy and curriculum based on

his or her best judgment as a highly trained professional educator. Our overall ability to teach our students well is borne out by the most recent evaluations: in the Spring of 2014, the overall evaluation score for all philosophy classes was 4.64/5. In the Summer of 2014, the overall evaluation score for all philosophy classes was 4.92/5!

In the case of PHIL 322, MacMullan continues to interact with students in class and to review their written work to assess which major figures in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy need the greatest review and explanation and which pedagogical methods are effective and which are not. Every time he teaches the class, he makes small adjustments based on his conversations with students, their interests and their previous coursework. The philosophy program at EWU uses a method of instruction that has proven successful in the humanities *literally for millennia*: we foster a learning environment that is open, dynamic and collegial and trust the abilities of the individual instructors, each of whom are highly trained, well versed in the tradition and deeply concerned with their student's learning. When and if instructors need help or advice, they ask their colleagues. The proof of the success of this method is borne out by the high ratio of majors to instructors, as well as the high evaluation scores of the philosophy program as a whole.

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

There is no need to implement any structural changes as EWU philosophy instructors are excellent at helping students achieve SLO's.