PHIL Program Assessment

Recent History of the Philosophy Program

The philosophy program at USU has undergone some dramatic changes in the last 5 years. Four of our six faculty have retired or moved away from the university and have been replaced with new assistant professors. To inform those searches, which provided an opportunity for dramatic renewal, the program re-oriented to become more intentionally focused on public philosophy. We understand that broadly to mean offering philosophy courses that engage with questions that impact our students in their personal lives, that engage with public square issues, and that more intentionally prepare students for employment rather than graduate school in philosophy. But we also wanted to give our faculty freedom to do publicly-engaged philosophy, so taking philosophy out into the community.

This program revision informed the hiring of our new faculty and some program revisions. Now that we are fully staffed, we've made additional tweaks to the program and are establishing an assessment program. However, recent curriculum meetings have focused on the transition to a new general education model for BHUs in the Center for Civic Excellence, and as philosophy has historically been a major provider of BHU seats, this presents a major shift for our program: existing BHUs will have to be eliminated or redesigned as DHAs or electives. As a result, an updated curriculum map is not likely to be completed until at least the end of Spring 2027.

Overview of PHIL Assessment Plan

We have identified 4 broad outcomes, each with several discreet and measurable acts of the intellect. These have been developed into a 10-row rubric: see Appendix 1 below.

Faculty will be invited to identify suitable outcomes for their courses, new courses will be proposed to address any gaps, and the curriculum committee will map our new learning outcomes to the curriculum by the end of Spring 2027, whereupon this map will be reviewed and voted upon by faculty. As a general rule, lower division courses will bias toward analysis/comprehension, while upper division courses will focus more on evaluation/critique, synthesis/integration, and application. However, courses will not be restricted to *only* doing the outcomes assigned; they will simply be committed to realizing those outcomes.

In order to create a pre-program non-credit assessment, we are developing a application for students to join the major. In that application, students will answer one of the following questions:

1. What is the meaning of life?
2. What is the best way of making sense of the moral life?
3. What is real?

Philosophy faculty will score these pre-program artefacts using the 10-row rubric of our program learning outcomes.

As part of their capstone experience, students will put together a portfolio. That portfolio will include (a) a final project, (b) their original application essay, and (c) a constructive critique of their original answer to their chosen question. (In the meantime, capstone students who did not complete the pre-program assessment will be tasked with writing their answers to the following pair of questions: (1) "What do you expect to gain from a philosophy degree?" (2) "What did you actually gain from your philosophy degree?".) The capstone experience will also include a presentation to the philosophy faculty and peers.

Philosophy faculty will likewise score these post-program artefacts using the 10-row rubric of our program learning outcomes.

Once scoring is complete, the philosophy faculty will meet to discuss the results. The faculty will identify any issues with progress on the application essays or with the culminating performance of the final project. This collective reflection will identify areas in the curriculum and pedagogy of the program where improvements could be made, along with a timeline for implementing those improvements.

Depending on how students are found to work their way through the PHIL major, mid-program assessments could be added to the required PHIL 3010/3020 history sequence, in the event that we decide we need such data to examine a particular aspect of student progress.

Appendix 1. PHIL Program Assessment Rubric

Analysis & Comprehension	Exemplary	Advanced	Proficient	Developing	Novice
Defines important terms clearly, making necessary distinctions.	Provides exemplary and nuanced definitions of important terms, and/or makes subtle and profound distinctions between concepts, displaying exceptional depth of comprehension.	Offers sophisticated definitions of important terms, and/or makes nuanced distinctions between concepts, displaying depth and insight.	Provides clear definitions of important terms and/or makes necessary distinctions between concepts with clarity.	Offers basic definitions of important terms and/or attempts to make necessary distinctions between concepts but lacks precision.	Provides limited definitions of important terms and/or struggles to make necessary distinctions.
Demonstrates understanding of important philosophical claims, concepts, and theories.	Exhibits an exceptional understanding of important claims, offering original and profound insights.	Shows advanced understanding of important claims, offering insightful interpretations.	Demonstrates solid understanding of important claims.	Shows partial understanding of important claims.	Demonstrates minimal understanding of important claims.
Explains the process of reasoning evident in arguments.	Explanation of reasoning in arguments is comprehensive, sophisticated, and persuasive, highlighting exceptional critical thinking abilities.	Explanation of reasoning in arguments is detailed and illuminating, showcasing advanced analytical skills.	Explanation of reasoning in arguments is clear and adequately supported.	Explanation of reasoning in arguments is present but lacks depth or coherence.	Explanation of reasoning in arguments is rudimentary or absent.

Evaluation & Critique	Exemplary	Advanced	Proficient	Developing	Novice
Evaluates with precision the evidence, structure of arguments, and	Demonstrates exemplary ability in evaluating evidence, the	Exhibits advanced skills in evaluating evidence, the structure of	Demonstrates proficiency in evaluating evidence, the structure of	Shows some ability to evaluate evidence, the structure of	Demonstrates minimal ability to evaluate evidence, the structure of

quality of reasoning	structure of arguments, and the quality of reasoning, displaying mastery.	arguments, and the quality of reasoning with precision and depth.	arguments, and the quality reasoning with precision.	arguments, and the quality of reasoning with basic precision.	arguments, and the quality reasoning.
Proposes alternate perspectives or devise relevant objections and counter-examples	Offers highly insightful alternate perspectives and relevant objections, showcasing exceptional critical thinking.	Effectively proposes alternate perspectives and relevant objections, demonstrating critical thinking.	Capably proposes alternate perspectives and relevant objections effectively.	Attempts to propose alternate perspectives or relevant objections, but lacks depth.	Struggles to propose alternate perspectives or relevant objections.
Iterates these processes; refining, strengthening, or drawing conclusions about the veracity of positions.	Refines and strengthens positions to a high degree of sophistication, with exceptional clarity and coherence, and/or exhibits a profound understanding of the veracity of positions, drawing profound and compelling conclusions.	Refines and strengthens positions adeptly and/or draws nuanced, insightful conclusions about the veracity of positions.	Consistently refines and strengthens positions and/or draws reasonable conclusions about the veracity of positions.	Begins to refine or strengthen positions and/or assess the veracity of positions, but lacks consistency.	Limited ability to refine or strengthen positions, and/or assess the veracity of positions.

Synthesis & Integration	**Exemplary**	**Advanced**	**Proficient**	**Developing**	**Novice**
Synthesizes insights from across a range of philosophically influential historical figures, (ethical)	Demonstrates exemplary ability in synthesizing insights from historical figures, theories,	Exhibits advanced skills in synthesizing insights from historical figures, theories, perspectives, or	Demonstrates proficiency in synthesizing insights from historical figures, theories, perspectives, or	Shows some ability to synthesize insights from historical figures, theories, perspectives, or	Demonstrates limited ability to synthesize insights from historical figures, theories,

theories, perspectives, or methods	perspectives, or methods, showing mastery and creativity.	methods, displaying depth and insight.	methods, showing a coherent understanding.	methods, but with inconsistencies.	perspectives, or methods.
Identifies implications or extensions of principles	Identifies implications or extensions of principles with exceptional depth and clarity, offering profound insights.	Identifies implications or extensions of principles with sophistication, drawing nuanced connections.	Capably identifies implications or extensions of principles, making connections with clarity.	Begins to identify implications or extensions of principles, but may miss key connections.	Struggles to identify implications or extensions of principles.
Formulates thoughtful questions or novel conclusions	Formulates questions or conclusions that are highly thoughtful, innovative, and compelling, showcasing exceptional intellectual prowess.	Formulates questions or conclusions with complexity and originality, showcasing advanced critical thinking.	Formulates thoughtful questions or conclusions, demonstrating depth of analysis and understanding.	Formulates questions or conclusions with some thoughtfulness, but lacks complexity.	Formulates basic questions or conclusions, lacking depth or originality.

Application	Exemplary	Advanced	Proficient	*Emerging*	Novice
applies insights and skills developed in the course of their philosophical study to various contexts in and outside the discipline of philosophy; ... *e.g.*, demonstrating an ability to talk about portable intellectual skills in job or graduate school application	Demonstrates an exceptional ability to apply insights and skills developed in philosophical study to contexts outside the discipline of philosophy. Shows a sophisticated understanding of portable intellectual skills and consistently articulates their	Demonstrates a strong ability to apply insights and skills developed in philosophical study to contexts outside the discipline of philosophy. Shows a clear understanding of portable intellectual skills and consistently articulates their	Demonstrates a moderate ability to apply insights and skills developed in philosophical study to contexts outside the discipline of philosophy. Shows understanding of portable intellectual skills and their relevance in various contexts,	Demonstrates limited ability to apply insights and skills developed in philosophical study to contexts outside the discipline of philosophy. Shows some understanding of portable intellectual skills but struggles to articulate their	Does not demonstrate an ability to apply insights and skills developed in philosophical study to contexts outside the discipline of philosophy. Shows little to no understanding of portable intellectual skills or their

materials; engaging in thoughtful discussion of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement; or through expression of an examined life by communicating nuance in questions of identity, community, human flourishing and purpose	relevance in various contexts with depth and insight.

Engages adeptly in thoughtful discussions of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement, demonstrating exceptional depth, clarity, and insight.

Demonstrates an exceptionally nuanced understanding of questions of identity, community, human flourishing, and purpose, and communicates this nuance with exceptional clarity and depth. | relevance in various contexts.

Engages effectively in thoughtful discussions of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement, demonstrating depth, clarity, and insight.

Demonstrates a nuanced understanding of questions of identity, community, human flourishing, and purpose, and communicates this nuance effectively. | though may lack consistency or depth.

Engages in thoughtful discussions of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement with some degree of depth and clarity.

Demonstrates awareness of questions of identity, community, human flourishing, and purpose, and communicates some nuance in these areas. | relevance in various contexts.

Engages somewhat in thoughtful discussions of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement, but lacks depth or clarity.

Demonstrates basic awareness of questions of identity, community, human flourishing, and purpose, but lacks nuance in communication. | relevance in various contexts.

Unable to engage in thoughtful discussions of issues in public philosophy settings or through community engagement.

Demonstrates a lack of examination or nuance in questions of identity, community, human flourishing, and purpose. |