











Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2013 - 2014

Philosophy BA

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Goal	Improving Critical Thinking And Analytic Reasoning 1  Students completing the critical thinking and logic courses in our curriculum will develop a broad-based skills in critical thinking and formal logic.
Objective (L)	Demonstrate Critical Thinking Skills  Critical thinking skills are an essential component of philosophical work. Students will be able to analyze arguments and draw conclusions from available information.
Indicator	Response Scores On TACTS   All students who take PHIL 2303 will be tested on their critical thinking skills. All faculty who teach PHIL 2303 will administer the Texas Assessment of Critical Thinking Skill (TACTS)s, an externally validated test of critical thinking skills, in a pre-test/post-test format. The TACTS is a broad-based assessment of critical thinking skills that goes beyond the current scope of PHIL 2303. This will allow the faculty to determine areas that may be added to our current curriculum in the future. In addition, it allows for substantial flexibility in what is taught; thereby ensuring academic freedom for instructors to design individual sections around their own expertise and interests. A copy of the current TACTS is attached. A copy of the credited responses is attached. The Philosophy Program Coordinator, currently Dr. Fair, will be responsible for ensuring that all faculty who teach PHIL 2303 effectively administer the pre- and post-tests in every section of their course. One faculty member, currently Dr. Sanford, will be responsible for gathering pre- and post-test data from the faculty members who teach PHL 2303.
Criterion	Statistically Significant Improvement From The TACTS Pre-test To The TACTS Post-test.  A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. The philosophy program expects to see a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From Pre-Test To Post-Test   A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 540 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.
Criterion	Improvement In Calculating Probabilities  The data from the team that developed the TACTS show that a knowledge gap exists with respect to decision making when an outcome depends upon the conjunction of two probabilistic events. Their data show that less than 20% of those tested correctly answered the following question: "George is waiting for two of his customers, Fuzzy Logic Computers, Inc. and Stalking Horse Designs, to pay their bills. If either of them pays before the end of the month, then George can pay his supplier. But if neither of them pays, then George will have to take out a bank loan. George estimates that the chance that Fuzzy Logic will pay in time is 70% and the chance Stalking Horse Designs will pay in time is 60%. Assuming that his estimates are correct and that the two events are independent, what is the chance that George will have to take out a bank loan? (a) 12% (b) 40% (c) 65% (d) 42% (e) 88%"" 2012-2013 will be the fourth year that the Philosophy Program will expect all faculty to evaluate this type of reasoning as part of the critical thinking course. We will consider this effort successful if there is at least a 75% improvement on this type of question from the pre-test to the post-test.

Finding

Improvement In Calculating Probabilities 

The sample is limited to only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test. For students whose pre-test score was reported, 97 out of 536 (18.1%) correctly answered the question. On the post-test, 228 out of 536 (42.5%) correctly answered the question.

This represents a 134.8% improvement in the percentage of students who successfully answered the probability questions from the pre-test to the post-test. This is similar to the 127.0% improvement seen in 2012-2013 and 126.2% improvement seen in 2011-2012. Recent results compare favorably to the 85.6% improvement seen in 2009-2010 and 106.5% seen in 2010-2011; yet, it remains a challenge to improve even further. The sample is limited to only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test.

Action

Ongoing Improvement At Calculating Probabilites 

Although our data showed a significant improvement at calculating probabilities, it is expected that our faculty can improve on our performance. All Philosophy Program faculty who taught PHIL 2303 during 2013-2014 will be invited to share their experiences with those who will teach PHIL 2303 during 2014-2015. In addition, input will be sought from other faculty who have experience teaching probability-based content. The goal will be to identify ways in which pedagogy in this area can be further improved without cutting back on the successful core of critical thinking skills we have regularly taught. It is expected that faculty will implement and evaluate new approaches during 2014-2015. Finally, the Program has plans to include expectations for teaching Core Curriculum classes in all hiring decisions during 2014-2015.

Goal

Understanding Of General Philosophical Concepts 1 

Ensure that students acquire a general understanding of basic philosophical concepts.

Objective (L)

Demonstrate Basic Understanding Of Core Concepts In Philosophy 

As students progress through the Philosophy BA, they will acquire a basic understanding of metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory. This basic information, provided by our introductory courses serves as the foundation for student success in upper-division courses.

Indicator

Statistically Significant Improvement Of Student Scores From Pre-test To Post-test (2361/2603)  

All students in PHIL 2361 and PHIL 2603 will be tested on their knowledge of basic concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory using a locally standardized pre-test and post-test for each course. Following a review of best practices for the teaching of these courses, a group of Program faculty chose the questions for the assessment. The questions asked cover the range of concepts that are taught in peer departments. Instruction on these concepts promotes a basic competence in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory. The attached documents provide the assessment instruments for PHIL 2361 and PHL 2603 as well as the credited responses for each.

Criterion

Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2361/2603) 

A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2306)
	<p>PHIL 2306 students demonstrated a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test (M=10.2) to the post-test (15.2). While statistically significant, the post-test mean is only 61.0% of 25 items. These results are consistent with the results from 2011-2013. See the attached data. Hence, basic concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory must be addressed in inventive ways so that deep learning versus shallow learning is accomplished</p>
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2361)
	<p>PHIL 2361 students demonstrated a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test (M=6.4) to the post-test (10.4). While statistically significant, the post-test mean is only 61.0% of 25 items. These results are consistent with the results from 2011-2013. See the attached data. Hence, basic concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory must be addressed in inventive ways so that deep learning versus shallow learning is accomplished.</p>
Indicator	Improved Student Knowledge Of Kant
	<p>Students will demonstrate increased understanding of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. Questions 10 and 12 on the pre-test and post-test were chosen to measure our Program faculty's ability to improve this targeted area.</p>
Criterion	Improvement At Identifying Major Themes Of Kantian Philosophy
	<p>After comparing students' pre-test and post-test performance on questions 10 and 12 of those tests, the Program will consider this effort successful if the data indicate at least a 75% improvement in student performance on each question. Anything less will be taken as an indication that the Program must improve its performance in this area. Regardless of performance, the 2012-2013 data will serve as a baseline for measuring future performance.</p>
Finding	Improvement In Students' Knowledge Of Kantian Philosophy
	<p>20.4% of students chose the correct answer for question 10 on the pre-test. This improved to 46.9% on the post-test. This represented an 129.9% improvement. Likewise, 24.3% of students chose the correct answer for question 12 on the pre-test. This improved to 48.2% on the post-test. This represented an 98.4% improvement Though students demonstrated improved performance on both questions, the Program is not satisfied that this is the best that we can do in this area.</p>
Indicator	Improved Student Knowledge Of The Death Penalty Debate
	<p>Students will demonstrate increased understanding of arguments related to the death penalty. Questions 19 and 20 on the pre-test and post-test were chosen to measure our Program faculty's ability to improve this targeted area.</p>
Criterion	Improvement At Identifying Arguments Related To The Death Penalty
	<p>After comparing students' pre-test and post-test performance on questions 19 and 20 of those tests, the Program will consider this effort successful if the data indicate at least a 75% improvement in student performance on each question. Anything less will be taken as an indication that the Program must improve its performance in this area. Regardless of performance, the 2012-2013 data will serve as a baseline for measuring future performance.</p>

Finding	Improvement In Students' Recognition Of Arguments Relating To The Death Penalty
	19.2% of students chose the correct answer for question 19 on the pre-test. This improved to 42.6% on the post-test. This represented an 121.9% improvement. Likewise, 23.5% of students chose the correct answer for question 20 on the pre-test. This improved to 56.2% on the post-test. This represented an 139.1% improvement. Though students demonstrated improved performance on both questions, the Program is not satisfied that this is the best that we can do in this area.
Action	PHIL 2361/2306 Improvement
	The Program will continue its targeted instructional effort aimed at improving student learning. In PHIL 2306, this effort will focus on improving students' knowledge of arguments related to the death penalty. In PHIL 2361, it will continue the focus on Kantian philosophy. Of particular interest will be demonstration of improved performance over the 2012-2013 baseline data. Additionally, as the Program will seek data from evaluation of the PHIL 3364/3365 sections with an eye toward identifying additional opportunities to improve the overall presentation of general philosophical concepts to our students. In addition, the Program will implement a revised pre-test/post-test for PHIL 2306 that addresses faculty and student concerns about the wording of question 19 on the current instrument. Finally, the Program has plans to include expectations for teaching Core Curriculum classes in all hiring decisions during 2014-2015.
Objective (L)	Demonstrate Advanced Understanding Of History Of Philosophy
	Well-educated philosophy students will demonstrate appreciation for the arguments and positions of earlier thinkers. Because so much of what is written in philosophy is a reaction to the metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions of earlier thinking, it is the core of well-rounded philosophical education.
Indicator	Pre-test Post-test Response Scores On Locally-Standardized Instruments (3364/3365)
	All students in PHL 3364 and PHL 3365 will be tested on their knowledge of general concepts in the history of philosophy. All faculty who teach these courses will administer a pre-test and post-test to all students. All Philosophy BA students are required to take PHL 364 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy) and PHL 365 (Modern Philosophy). Together, these courses provide students with upper-level instruction covering the history of metaphysics and epistemology. Following a review of best practices for the teaching of these courses, a group of Program faculty chose the questions for the assessment. The questions cover the range of concepts that are taught in peer departments. Instruction on these concepts promotes a well-rounded understanding of the history of philosophy.
Criterion	PHL 3365 Assessment
	A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.
Finding	Improvement In Student's Knowledge Of Modern Philosophy
	A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 14 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.

Criterion

PHL 3364 Assessment

A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

Finding

Improvement In Students' Knowledge Of Ancient And Medieval Philosophy

A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 9 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.

Action

Responding To The 2013-2014 Findings

The Program will continue to assess PHIL 3364/3365 using our current instrument. Given the small sample size of this new data set, it is of limited use; however, we plan to combine it with the data from 2014-2014 in an effort to establish a baseline from which to plan for and measure improvement moving forward. These efforts will be headed by Dr. Fair and Dr. Gurley as long as they continue to teach these courses.

Goal

Revision Of PHIL 3362 And Development Of A New Assessment Tool

In Fall 2013, PHIL 3362 will be taught by two new faculty members who have been asked to revise both the content of the course and the assessment instrument. The Program's goal is to establish a new standard for teaching PHIL 3362.

Objective (P)

Creation Of Revised On-line And In-person PHIL 3362 Courses

The Program plans to implement revised versions of PHIL 3362 in on-line and in-person formats that take advantage of the talents of our new faculty for 2013-2014.

KPI Performance Indicator

Delivery Of On-line And In-person PHIL 3362 Sections

The Program will meet this objective if it is able to offer students revised versions of PHIL 3362 in on-line and in-person formats.

Result

2013-2014 PHIL 3362 Offerings

In both Fall 2013 and Spring 2014, the Program offered PHIL 3362 in both on-line and in-person formats.

KPI Performance Indicator

Development Of A New Assessment Tool For PHIL 3362

Upon completion of their course revisions, Dr. Diaz and Dr. Brommage, who will be teaching PHIL 3362 for the foreseeable future are tasked with development an appropriate assessment technique for PHIL 3362. We will consider these objectives successful when the assessment protocol has been finalized.

Result

Partial Completion Of Assessment Protocol

Dr. Diaz and Dr. Brommage agreed that the best method for assessing PHIL 3362 will be use indicator questions embedded in the final exam of each course to measure student outcomes. The Philosophy Program

agreed with this assessment method. Unfortunately before Dr. Brommage and Dr. Diaz finished identifying the appropriate questions to embed and the expected student success rates for the questions, Dr. Diaz departed for a new position. Dr. Brommage and Dr. Sanford, SACS Coordinator for the Program, agreed that the choice of questions should be delayed until Dr. Diaz's replacement was given a chance to provide input. David Wright, M.A. will succeed Dr. Diaz for 2013-2014. He and Dr. Brommage are expected to make a recommendation on the final assessment protocol to the Program prior to the start of the 2014-2015 academic year.

Action

Implementation Of PHIL 2352 Assessment

The Program will finalize the assessment protocol and successfully implement it in all sections of PHIL 2352, the revised course number for PHIL 3362, starting in Fall 2014.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

The Program will continue its efforts to improve the links between PHL 2361/2603 and PHL 3364/3365. The goal will be to provide greater continuity between the introductory and advanced courses with an eye toward improving students' long-term outcomes as they proceed through the Program's curriculum. By linking the content and presentation of materials in the lower-level courses to what is expected in the upper-level courses, the Program expects to improve student outcomes and deep learning as measured by improved performance by students in PHL 3364/3365. Once the Program has data on the success of our new efforts in PHIL 3364/3365, we should be in a position to identify areas for improvement.

Revision of the PHIL 3362 curriculum and its assessment process is expected to be completed during 2013-2014.

Due to the influx of new faculty members and the concomitant expansion of perspectives concerning contemporary moral issues, the Program has convened a committee of faculty members to revise the expectations and assessment instrument of PHIL 2306. This committee has its first meeting scheduled for September 2013, and is expected to issue its findings in time for Fall 2014 implementation.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

With the successful revision of PHIL 3364/3365, the Program has made progress on solidifying the core of the philosophy major. In 2014-2105, we will gather data on both overall student performance and performance on individual assessment questions in PHIL 3364/3365 in an effort to identify opportunities to improve our lower-level course support for the upper-level core of our major.

The Program successfully offered in-person and on-line versions of PHIL 3362, and has nearly completed the assessment protocol for these courses. We expect that it will be finalized and available for implementation in all Fall 2014 sections.

The Program did not fully accomplish its goal of revising the PHIL 2306 pre-test/post-test. Owing to multiple disruptions (maternity leave, sick leave, faculty member resignation, etc.) the committee was unable to come together and develop a full revision of the instrument. However, the committee did agree on a revision to the current instrument that addressed the one weakness that was unanimously identified. After consultation between Dr. Botero, the committee Chair, and Dr. Sanford, the Program's SACS Coordinator, it was decided that the Program would move forward during 2014-2015 with the revised instrument and delay the full revision of the assessment protocol until the 2015-2016 academic year. The primary reason for this delay is the the Program expects to hire 2-3 new faculty who will teach in this area, and we would like to insure the that instrument is tailored the teaching interests and expertise of the Program faculty.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2013 - 2014 Cycle Findings.

The Program will gather data indicating student performance on individual questions in PHIL 3364/3365 as a

means of identifying areas for improving both those courses and the student preparation provided for those courses by PHIL 2306/2361.

The Program will begin gathering data on student outcomes in PHIL 3362 as a means of continuing our efforts to assess and improve student learning related to logic and critical thinking.

The Program will begin investigating the need for establishing expected learning outcomes for PHIL 2303, 3364, and 3365 that go beyond statistically significant improvement from pre-test to post-test.

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