

**Department of Philosophy
University of New Mexico
Graduate 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: 7 January 2009

B. Academic Program of Study

Ph.D., 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 Ph.D. in Philosophy

The graduate programs in philosophy are aimed at broadening and deepening the knowledge of philosophy that our students began to acquire at the undergraduate level while at the same time guiding them in focusing on a particular area of specialization. The ultimate aim of the graduate programs is to enable students to produce original research in some area of philosophy which will potentially contribute to the advancement of the discipline. To that end, the further development of written and oral communication skills is essential. Through the completion of our programs, our graduate students are also exposed to the expectations and demands of a professional career in academic philosophy.

Given these general aims, many of the broad learning goals are the same for both the M.A. and Ph.D. programs. However, we expect the level of knowledge, the development of communication skills, and the originality and creativity of the research of our Ph.D. students to significantly exceed those of our M.A. students, who are typically in our department for only two years.

Knowledge of Philosophy: Given that all our graduate students must complete the “background core” requirements described above, and given as well that most of our in-coming students have an undergraduate degree in philosophy, we expect that the students entering our graduate programs will already have a broad knowledge of both the history of philosophy and the different problem areas of philosophy (such as ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology). Our goal in our graduate programs is to broaden and deepen their knowledge of philosophy by offering graduate seminars that emphasize (1) the relationship between the different problem areas of philosophy and the history of philosophy, and (2) the problems that dominate contemporary philosophy.

In regard to (1), graduate students must complete at least one seminar, and in most cases will complete several seminars, dedicated to a central figure or an important movement in the history of philosophy. In these seminars, graduate students are expected to do close and careful readings of

primary texts, but they are also expected to stay mindful of how the works of central historical figures gave rise to problems in contemporary philosophy. For instance, when discussing Descartes' *Meditations*, students are expected to understand the context in which this landmark text was written and know, for instance, that Descartes was responding to the Scholastic philosophy of the early seventeenth century as they try to interpret the text. But they are also encouraged to remain aware of how Descartes' suggestions regarding human knowledge, free will, and the existence of God helped motivate many of the central questions that continue to shape discussions in contemporary epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics.

In regard to (2), graduate students must complete at least one course in each of the main problem areas of philosophy, namely, metaphysics, ethics, and the theory of knowledge. In these seminars, students are exposed to recent literature that addresses some of the problems that characterize contemporary philosophy. For instance, recent seminars have addressed the current popularity of "contextualism" in epistemology, the importance of Kantian themes in late 20th Century ethics, and recent metaphysical attempts to explain causation and the nature of space and time by appeal to science. Moreover, by completing the Proseminar requirement (a 1-credit course that serves as an introduction to graduate study in our department), our graduate students are introduced to the contributions our faculty members are making to the contemporary philosophical landscape. Recent faculty presentations have focused on current debates in Indian Philosophy, Kierkegaard scholarship, and 20th Century Continental philosophy.

Ability to Carry Out Philosophical Research: In the course of studying the history and the different systematic areas of philosophy in greater breadth and depth students naturally find themselves drawn to certain figures or philosophical issues about which they believe they have something unique and interesting to say. Students at this point are expected, with the mentorship of individual faculty in independent studies and in chosen seminars, to begin to develop expertise in a chosen area of specialization that will eventually serve as the basis for writing a work of original philosophical research. Students must master the primary and secondary literature of the problem or figure in which they are interested, acquiring whatever technical skills may be necessary to comprehend that literature. They must learn to formulate a clear thesis that articulates an interpretation of the thought of a particular philosophical figure or the solution of a particular philosophical problem. They must be able to relate their thesis to current secondary literature, explaining among other things how their project constitutes an original contribution to the field. They should be able to develop their thesis thoroughly, rigorously, and at length, laying the historical and/or theoretical groundwork for it, constructing a comprehensive argument for it, and defending it against possible objections.

Scholarship Skills: Essential to being able to carry out philosophical research are two fundamental skills that graduate students must develop throughout the course of their studies: the ability to write publishable papers and the ability to communicate ideas orally, whether in general seminar discussions or via paper presentations.

In regard to their written work, we set the standards very high in our graduate seminars and expect students to compose research papers that reflect their knowledge of primary texts, their understanding of the problems emerging from the texts, and their ability to propose novel ways for addressing these problems. Doing so, of course, requires that our students know how to craft a clear and well-organized paper, but they must also be able to articulate their ideas in a way that meets the standards of professional philosophy. In particular, they must be able to motivate the problems they address (usually by appeal to current debates in contemporary scholarship), and argue for the novelty and effectiveness of the approach they wish to defend. We expect our students to hone these skills by applying feedback they receive from faculty members and also by applying principles of writing learned from reading secondary literature to their own written work.

We also want our students to develop their abilities to communicate orally. We thus encourage our graduate students to actively participate in seminar discussions and also, in some cases, require that they prepare presentations and lead the seminar on a chosen day. All our graduate students must also complete oral examinations during the course of their studies. Our Ph.D. students, in particular, must give an oral defense of their dissertation prospectus and their dissertation. They may also elect to take the qualifying exam, which gauges their general knowledge of the history of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, as an oral exam.

For students working in an area of the history of philosophy an additional skill is necessary for research, namely, the ability to read the texts they will be focusing on in the original language(s) in which they were composed. Thus, Ph.D. students working in the history of philosophy are required to pass a reading comprehension exam in a language related to their dissertation topic.

Knowledge of Professional Philosophy: In addition to broadening and deepening our students' knowledge of philosophy, providing them with the basic scholarly skills necessary for carrying out philosophical research, and guiding them in producing a work of original scholarship, we want to introduce our graduate students to the standards and conventions of the academic profession of philosophy. They should, for instance, know the major professional organizations and journals in philosophy, the journals that publish papers in their area of specialization, and the annual conferences where they can present their research. Though much of this knowledge is passed on to students through mentoring by faculty in independent study and thesis and dissertation work, we have recently added a new session to our annual Proseminar ("A Beginner's Guide to Professional Philosophy") that, among other things, introduces students to the major philosophical organizations as well as outlets for presenting and publishing their work.

Moreover, we want our students to be familiar with the professional standards of publication and conference presentation. Our students will gain much of this knowledge by reading secondary literature in their fields and by attending the talks that are part of our colloquium series. We also actively encourage and financially support our students attending and reading papers at national meetings of the American Philosophical Association.

We want our students to be prepared for the next stage of their professional career in philosophy. If they are Ph.D. students moving on to a job at an institution of higher learning, our students should know how to prepare a professional CV, write a statement of research interests, and compose letters of application for an academic position. Though much of this knowledge is gained from consulting with a faculty advisor, these skills are also covered in our annual Proseminar.

Values: We wish to inculcate two values of particular importance for graduate students in philosophy: *intellectual independence* and *intellectual integrity*. Intellectual independence is the resolve to take upon oneself all that is necessary to become an expert in one's chosen field. Although one should certainly seek guidance from faculty mentors, one recognizes, in the end, that philosophy is in large part a solitary quest bounded only by one's own desire and ability, and that philosophers of substance are largely self-taught. Successful graduate students should be committed to acquiring on their own, without external guidelines or limits, whatever knowledge and skills are necessary to excel in their areas of specialization.

Intellectual integrity is a commitment to openness and honesty in the pursuit of knowledge. It includes a willingness to recognize when one has made a mistake or failed adequately to comprehend an idea and to make appropriate corrections; the courage to take risks – to advance theses, for instance, which could turn out to be wrong; and the perseverance to keep working on the solution of a

problem until one gets it right. Intellectual integrity is the very heart of philosophy; it is the virtue that yields philosophical results of substance and moves the discipline forward.

Given the distinctive character of our department, there is another value that we seek to cultivate in our graduate programs. Many if not most philosophy departments that offer graduate degrees focus entirely on the Western philosophical tradition and emphasize either the history of philosophy, analytic philosophy, or Continental philosophy. Our department cannot be classified in this way. While many of our faculty members are trained primarily in Western philosophy, we have a distinctive strength in non-Western/Asian philosophy, and our faculty members have a diverse set of interests and specialties that span the history of philosophy and trends in contemporary analytic and Continental philosophy. Given the distinctive character of our department, and thus, the distinctive character of our course offerings at the graduate level, we want our graduate students to develop an appreciation for the diversity of approaches that one can adopt when addressing philosophical problems.

Learning goals specific to our Ph.D. program

By developing the knowledge, skills, and values listed above, we want our Ph.D. students to be prepared for an academic career in philosophy. The goals above will help them develop as scholars, researchers, and members of the professional community. There is a further goal for our Ph.D. students: we want to prepare them for service as teachers to undergraduate students. Thus, all our Ph.D. candidates are given teaching responsibilities throughout their time in our program. They usually begin their training as graders for a large section of a lower-division course, such as PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy. Then, within two semesters, they move on to teach independently a section of PHIL 156: Reasoning and Critical Thinking. We currently require that each course taught independently by our Ph.D. students be observed by a full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty member. The faculty member writes an evaluation of the session observed, which is placed in the student's file, and, in some cases, also meets with the student to discuss her or his teaching performance.

2. List of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the Ph.D. in Philosophy

- A.1. Students can explain, both in discussion and in writing, the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics in depth, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.
- A.2. Students can give, both in discussion and in writing, an overview of the current state of knowledge and research in a chosen field of specialization, referencing both major primary works and important secondary sources.
- A.3. Students can formulate a thesis expressing an interpretation of the thought of a particular figure in the history of philosophy or the solution to a particular problem in contemporary philosophy.
- B.1. Students can write a publishable philosophy paper.
- B.2. Students can present a paper at a professional conference, preferably one of the national meetings of the American Philosophical Association.
- B.3. Students can compose a work of original philosophical research built around a clearly articulated thesis and constituting, arguably, a contribution to a particular field of philosophical study.

Note: Given that the goal of the M.A. program is to prepare students to pursue further graduate work in Philosophy, it is not expected that M.A. students will demonstrate the same level of proficiency as Ph.D. students in their achievement of the above SLOs.

Student learning outcome specific to our Ph.D. program

The specific goal of the Ph.D. program is to prepare students for an academic career in philosophy, and more specifically, to be instructors of philosophy. Thus, we have identified an additional SLO specific to our Ph.D. students:

PhD.1: Students can give a thorough, detailed account of the history of philosophy from ancient to modern times, identifying its major periods, movements, and figures, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

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, both in discussion and in writing, the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics in depth, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.	X	X		
A.2. Students can give, both in discussion and in writing, an overview of the current state of knowledge and research in a chosen field of specialization, referencing both major primary works and important secondary sources.	X	X		
A.3. Students can formulate a thesis expressing an interpretation of the thought of a particular figure in the history of philosophy or the solution of a particular problem in contemporary philosophy.	X			
B.1. Students can write a publishable philosophy paper.		X		
B.3. Students can compose a work of original philosophical research built around a clearly articulated thesis and constituting, arguably, a contribution to a particular field of philosophical study.		X		
PhD.1: Students can give a thorough, detailed account of the history of philosophy from ancient to modern times, identifying its major periods, movements, and figures, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.	X	X		

Portfolios: Given that the ultimate goal of our graduate students is to write a publishable paper, the scoring rubric that will be used for assessing each paper in the portfolio is modeled on the general rubric used by Philosophy journals during the blind review process. (The specific rubric we've used as a model is from the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.) See Appendix 1 below. In addition to assessing each paper included in the portfolio, each faculty member will give each portfolio an overall assessment based on the scores generated using the rubric. See Appendix 2 for the portfolio scoring sheet.

Our target is to have average scores for Ph.D. students fall between 3 (good) and 4 (excellent) for at least 3/4 of the questions, i.e., for three of the four items listed on the portfolio scoring sheet.

Oral Presentations: Oral dissertation defenses of Ph.D. students will be evaluated by their dissertation committees according to a standard rubric, which will measure: ability to articulate the thesis of the research, ability to field and respond to questions, ability to defend the thesis against objections, etc. See Appendix 3 below for the oral exam assessment rubric.

Ph.D. students will be rated according to seven items and 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 five of the seven items listed on the rubric.

- B. **Who:** 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: All Ph.D. students will be asked to compile portfolios upon completing their degree requirements.

Oral Presentations: The oral defenses of all Ph.D. students will be assessed.

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

Given the relatively low number of M.A. students who graduate each year – for instance, there was only 1 in 2007 and only 1 in 2008 – we will collect M.A. portfolios as well as oral presentation assessments during AYs 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 before we begin our formal review. Given the relatively low number of Ph.D. students who graduate each year – for instance, there was 1 in 2007 and none in 2008 – we will collect Ph.D. portfolios as well as oral presentation assessments for four academic years (from fall 2008 to spring 2012) before we begin our formal review. Thus, the department will begin the assessment of its graduate programs with the assessment of its M.A. program in AY 10-11, followed by an assessment of its Ph.D. program in AY 12-13. Currently, in AY 08-09, both programs are being assessed in the framework of an Academic Program Review.

	M.A. Program	Ph.D. Program
Year 1 08-09	Collect portfolios and data from oral presentations	Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses
Year 2 09-10	Collect portfolios and data from oral presentations	Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses
Year 3 10-11	Portfolio Review SLOs A.2, A.3, B.1, B.3 September 2010 Due 15 Sept 2010 Evaluate Data from Oral Presentations SLOs A.1, A.2, A.3 March 2011 Due 15 April 2011	Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses
Year 4 11-12	Revise rubrics as needed; Collect portfolios and data from oral presentations	Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses
Year 5 12-13	Collect portfolios and data from oral presentations	Portfolio Review SLOs A.2, A.3, B.1, B.3 September 2012 Evaluate Data from Oral Presentations SLOs A.1, A.2, A.3, PhD.1 March 2013
Year 6 13-14	Collect portfolios and data from oral presentations	Revise rubrics as needed; Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses
Year 7 14-15	Portfolio Review SLOs A.2, A.3, B.1, B.3 September 2013 Evaluate Data from Oral Presentations SLOs A.1, A.2, A.3 March 2014	Collect portfolios and data from dissertation defenses

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).*

Ph.D. Portfolios

Beginning spring 2009, the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for Philosophy (currently Mary Domski) will collect student portfolios from Ph.D. students who have completed their degree requirements. The collection process will continue until fall 2012, when a committee of no less than three faculty members will review the portfolios according to a standard rubric. See Appendix 1 below. In addition to assessing each paper included in the portfolio, each faculty member will give each portfolio an overall assessment based on the scores generated using the rubric. See Appendix 2 below. 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 2012.

Ph.D. Oral Presentations

Beginning spring 2009, the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for Philosophy (currently Mary Domski) will collect assessment sheets from faculty who participate in the oral defenses of Ph.D. dissertations. See Appendix 3 below for the oral exam assessment rubric. Then, in spring 2013, the same committee of faculty who reviewed the Ph.D. portfolios in fall 2013 will also review the oral exam reports of the previous four years and compile a summary report. 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 academic year following the assessment of one of our graduate programs (namely, fall 2014 for the Ph.D. program), the department as a whole will examine the data collected from the student portfolios and oral presentations and the reports compiled by the assessment committee. We will use this data and the committee recommendations as we consider possible revisions to (1) the rubrics used for the Philosophy graduate program assessment, (2) the curriculum for graduate students in Philosophy, and (3) the assignments and methods we use in the courses required for our graduate students.

3. *How, when, and to whom will recommendations be communicated?*

If the department recommends changes to the rubrics used for the Philosophy graduate program 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 graduate students 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 sometime after our first faculty meeting of the year.

Appendix 1:
Rubric for evaluating papers included in M.A. and Ph.D. portfolios
 (based on the review rubric used by the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*)

1. Historical significance of the topic

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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2. Philosophical significance of the topic

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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3. Contribution made to scholarship on the topic

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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4. Completeness of the discussion

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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5. Familiarity with primary sources in their original language

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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6. Familiarity with appropriate editions of texts used

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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7. Familiarity with relevant secondary literature

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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8. Readability

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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9. Overall assessment of the paper: If you were reviewing this paper for a philosophy journal, which of the following assessments would you choose?

1. Outright Acceptance: Publish in present form.
2. Conditional Acceptance: Publish after minor revisions.
3. Revise and Resubmit: Paper not publishable in present form; reject but invite resubmission of a revised version.
4. Final Rejection: Reject without an invitation to revise and resubmit.

1 2 3 4 N/A

NB: A paper that falls into category 1 or 2 deals with a topic that is historically and philosophically significant and the author's thesis makes an original contribution to scholarship on the topic. A paper that falls into category 3 (Revise and Resubmit) deals with a topic that is historically and philosophically significant, and there is substantial evidence that the author can develop it to make an extraordinary contribution to scholarship on this topic.

The "N/A" would apply in a case where the paper is, for instance, an advanced textual analysis and the author is not aiming to make a contribution to contemporary scholarship.

Appendix 2: Portfolio Scoring Sheet

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Paper 1									
Paper 2									
Paper 3									
M.A. Paper or Chapter from Ph.D. Dissertation									
Average for each category									

Based on review of student writing, rate the student’s performance in the following categories:

SLO A.2: Student can give, in writing, an overview of the current state of knowledge and research in a chosen field of specialization, referencing both major primary works and important secondary sources.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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SLO A.3: Student can formulate a thesis expressing an interpretation of the thought of a particular figure in the history of philosophy or the solution of a particular problem in contemporary philosophy.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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SLO B.1: Student can write a publishable philosophy paper.

No clear potential 1	Some Potential 2	Strong Potential 3	Clearly capable 4	N/A
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SLO B.3: Student can compose a work of original philosophical research built around a clearly articulated thesis and constituting, arguably, a contribution to a particular field of philosophical study.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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Appendix 3: Oral Presentation Assessment for Ph.D. Students

SLO A.1: Student can explain, in discussion, the main problems of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, which are relevant to his/her PhD project, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

a. Student can explain one or more the main problems of metaphysics, which are relevant to his/her PhD project, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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b. Student can explain one or more the main problems of epistemology, which are relevant to his/her PhD project, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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c. Student can explain one or more the main problems of ethics, which are relevant to his/her PhD project, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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SLO A.2: Student can give, in discussion, an overview of the current state of knowledge and research in a chosen field of specialization, referencing both major primary works and important secondary studies.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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PhD.1: Students can give a thorough, detailed account of the history of philosophy from ancient to modern times, identifying its major periods, movements, and figures, appropriate to a teacher of philosophy at the college level.

d. Student shows an awareness of the connection between his/her PhD project and the progress of philosophy from ancient to modern times.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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e. Student shows an awareness of the connection between his/her PhD project and the major periods of the history of philosophy.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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f. Student shows an awareness of the connection between his/her PhD project and the major movements and figures in the history of philosophy.

Unacceptable 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	N/A
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