



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Department Writing Plan

Compiled by
Dr. Hans Pedersen, Philosophy
consultation by Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer, Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

Submitted to:
Dr. Mary MacLeod, Department Chair
the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy
Dean Yaw Asamoah, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Provost Timothy Moerland
Dr. KarenRose Cercone, Provost's Associate
Dr. Edel Reilly, Director of Liberal Studies

Table of Contents

<u>SUMMARY</u>	3
<u>PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC GENRES IN PHILOSOPHY</u>	4
<u>STUDENT WRITING SKILLS AND ABILITIES</u>	5
<u>INTEGRATION OF WRITING INTO UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM</u>	5
WRITING-TO-LEARN	5
DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN DISCIPLINARY GENRES	6
<u>COMMUNICATING WRITING EXPECTATIONS TO STUDENTS</u>	7
SYLLABUS STATEMENT	7
<u>IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF DEPARTMENT WRITING PLAN</u>	7
<u>WRITING OUTCOMES CURRICULUM MAP</u>	8
<u>APPENDIX A - WRITING ASSESSMENT OF PHIL SENIORS</u>	23
PHILOSOPHY WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC	23
<u>APPENDIX B - BASELINE RESULTS OF WRITING ASSESSMENT</u>	25
DISCUSSION OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS, BY THE WAC DIRECTOR	26

Summary

In creating their writing-enriched curriculum, department faculty member, Hans Pedersen, served as the liaison between WAC and PHIL. Pedersen used a template borrowed from the University of Minnesota¹ and adapted by Siegel Finer to thoroughly investigate where and how writing was already being taught in the PHIL curriculum, and where and how writing could be added to the curriculum, in order to draft the DWP for their department instructors.

Pedersen and Siegel Finer met monthly or every other month beginning in February 2017, to develop this DWP, and sought input from PHIL faculty before its finalization and adoption. They also developed a statement of “Department Commitment to Writing” to include on all syllabi for courses that will be a part of the writing-enriched curriculum.

At a department meeting on November 2nd, 2018, the PHIL faculty voted to support the Department Writing Plan as described below in addition to the WAC Director’s recommendations for continuing program facilitation on page seven of this document.

¹ University of Minnesota Writing Enriched Curriculum. 2013. <http://wec.umn.edu/Writingplans.html>

PHILOSOPHY

Department Writing Plan

Rollout Spring 2019

Professional and Academic Genres in Philosophy

Philosophy distinguishes itself by methods applicable in any domain and cultivates skills transferable to any career. Abstract skills in argumentation acquired by studying philosophy can be used to engage reasonably with clients, coworkers or fellow citizens, to defend policies, and to assess the implications of positions and strategies. The communications skills cultivated by philosophical study yield writing that is clear and precise. Philosophy students read carefully, think independently, and persevere in solving problems that lack easy answers. They distinguish knowledge from mere opinion, good evidence from bad, fact from value. They distinguish reasoned argument from unreasoned persuasion, well-founded belief from opinions deeply felt without warrant. All of these distinctions are foundational to the distinctive method of philosophy. Discriminative skills based on these distinctions matter in any field of work or thought.

Philosophy students, in virtue of the skills they learn at IUP, are well prepared to succeed once they graduate. Numerous studies make clear that PHIL students do well in standardized tests for acceptance to graduate programs, such as the GRE, LSAT, and GMAT.² Those not planning to continue their education are also in a position to succeed, including in some perhaps surprising environments, such as business. As noted in a report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, business leaders have expressed a demand for students with exactly the kinds of training they receive as philosophy students.³ According to the report, 93% of business leaders agree that “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate’s] undergraduate major.” For regardless of the their major, what is valued are “evidence-based reasoning, research skills and complex problem-solving skills [along with] ethical decision making.”⁴ Because of its commitment to inculcating just these skills, philosophy has even been characterized as the “most practical major.”⁵ Increasing recognition of philosophy’s suitability to provide students with “transferable skills”⁶ has put the lie to the picture of PHIL as an impractical discipline that is an obstacle

² <http://www.iup.edu/philosophy/about/>

³ <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/it-takes-more-major-employer-priorities-college-learning-and>

⁴ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/10/survey-finds-business-executives-arent-focused-majors-those-they-hire>

⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/10/is-philosophy-the-most-practical-major/246763/>

⁶ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/more-things-in-heaven-and-earth-horatio/404855.article>

for students when they look for a job. The versatility and career mobility that comes with a degree in philosophy flows directly from the nature of the discipline itself, one that emphasizes critical thinking, oral and written communication, and an openness to new ideas and perspectives.

The IUP Department of Philosophy is committed to helping students in improving their writing skills toward the goal of being able to communicate as professionals in the field are required to do.

Student Writing Skills and Abilities

In order to ensure that our students graduate with the sort of critical thinking and communicative abilities discussed in the previous section, we have developed the following list of specific abilities that we emphasize in the writing assignments in our classes:

1. Clearly define and explain difficult philosophical concepts.
2. Formulate and explain an original thesis.
3. Provide an effective defense of one's thesis.
4. Develop an original argument in defense of a thesis.
5. Clearly explain and articulate the steps in one's argument.
6. Anticipate and explain potential objections to one's thesis and argument.
7. Provide an effective response to anticipated objections.
8. Ground claims using relevant sources and evidence.

The IUP Department of Philosophy is committed to introducing, emphasizing, and reinforcing these skills and abilities throughout the curriculum, and does so through the purposeful mapping of writing assignments and activities that follows at the end of this document.

Integration of Writing into Undergraduate Curriculum

All permanent faculty members have completed the two-day Liberal Studies writing workshop and regularly teach writing intensive courses. All faculty members currently include multiple types of writing assignments in all of their PHIL courses (with the lone exception of PHIL 221: Symbolic Logic), whether or not they are labeled as writing intensive.

Writing instruction in PHIL is integrated in these two ways:

Writing-to-learn

Writing-to-learn activities encourage students to engage in the process of articulating their own interpretations of philosophical texts and their own opinions on philosophical debates. These writing activities are informal, graded for completion, and the audience

tends to be the student themselves. Again, there is already a fair degree of consistency in the use of these activities by different faculty members:

- Most courses across the curriculum: Homework response papers on assigned readings
- All 300- and 400-level courses: Various forms of preparatory writing for longer essays (e.g., abstracts, outlines, rough drafts, or engaging in peer editing)

Direct instruction in disciplinary genres

Writing-to-communicate involves students demonstrating an ability to explain philosophical ideas or arguments or a proficiency in a particular mode of writing with an assumed audience, in our case that of the standard philosophical practice of formulating a thesis and providing a logical defense of it. There is already a large degree of consistency in how faculty members use writing-to-communicate in their courses for this purpose:

- Most 100- or 200-level courses: Essay questions on exams asking students to certain philosophical ideas or arguments
- Some 200-level courses: Short philosophical essays (~1500 words)
- All 300- or 400-level courses: Longer philosophical essays (2000-3000 words)

Our main concern is finding ways to improve the highest level of writing students are expected to do—the long philosophical essays in 300- or 400-level courses. There is a consensus among faculty members that students are having problems gaining proficiency in writing these sorts of essays. It would be helpful to have more writing activities in place to serve as scaffolding to build students up to writing at this level.

The main change to be implemented is to use the two upper-level courses required for PHIL majors, PHIL 324: Ancient Greek Philosophy and PHIL 325: Early Modern European Philosophy, as “bridge” courses where students will be given scaled-back term paper assignments with a high degree of instructor involvement to ensure that students become familiar with the basic structure and mechanics of writing a longer philosophical essay. The exact form that this scaled-back assignment will take is still under discussion, but the most likely option at this point is for the instructor to provide students with paper topics and outlines giving them more detailed guidance regarding the main subsections their papers would need to have to adequately address each topic. It would be up to the students to write the subsections and knit them together into a cohesive paper. We will advise students to take one or both of these courses prior to enrolling in other upper-level courses, in which they will be expected to write a longer term paper more independently.

Even though this is done in most PHIL courses already, we will officially commit as a department to using WTL activities in all PHIL courses (with the exception of PHIL 221). Instructors will be given the option of incorporating in-class or out-of-class WTL assignments, but all courses will include some assignments of this sort.

Finally, we commit to having intra-departmental meetings once per semester to discuss writing practices used in our courses.

Communicating Writing Expectations to Students

As discussed above, almost all philosophy courses include substantive writing assignments. This makes it clear to students that learning to think philosophically is aided and perhaps even constituted by learning to articulate their thoughts in written form in a clear and logical manner. In upper-level courses, this emphasis is clearer still as all instructors require students to complete longer philosophical essays and provide students with preliminary steps for writing these papers as well as rubrics to give students a sense of what the final product should look like.

Outside of the classroom, the department makes the importance of writing for the discipline clear in two main ways. Each academic year we hold a department speaker series, during which we have three or four talks given by philosophers in our department or external faculty from nearby universities. Students are encouraged to attend and participate in the question and answer period. We also hold a departmental student essay contest at the end of every spring semester where we encourage students to submit any philosophical paper written at IUP, and we award rather large cash prizes for the top three entries.

Syllabus Statement

Our department has committed to including the following statement on writing in all of our course syllabi:

Syllabus statement: Writing is especially important for philosophy. When you write down your ideas and have them in front of you, you are better able to critically assess them, refine them, or expand upon them. To do philosophy well, it is essential that you write as we will in this class.

Implementation and Assessment of Department Writing Plan

The WAC Director recommends the following action items for continuing program facilitation:

- Elect at least one faculty member to continue to be the WAC/PHIL liaison (this should count as department service)
- Provide all newly hired faculty a copy of the DWP, and recommending attendance at a minimum of two WAC workshops or the May 2-day writing workshop for Liberal Studies faculty
- All faculty should add “Department Commitment to Writing” statement to syllabus as appropriate
- Department should continue biennial assessment, report results to the WAC director for feedback and guidance, and use assessment results and recommendations to revise curriculum (as listed below on pages 26-27).

- Add areas for the teaching and assessment of writing as goals on department five-year review documents
- Continue to update the writing outcomes curriculum map as courses are added, removed, and revised in the PHIL curriculum (and communicate these changes to the WAC Director)

Writing Outcomes Curriculum Map

The Writing Outcomes Curriculum Map demonstrates:

- Conscious effort on the part of department faculty at placing core disciplinary genres at appropriate levels of the curriculum, scaffolding and reinforcing the writing skills necessary for students to succeed in writing those genres (for example: introduction of short expository papers at the 300-level).
- Thoughtful integration of writing-to-learn activities in most courses in the curriculum (for example: assigning weekly writing responses on assigned readings).
- Balanced measures for assessing writing as process and product, that is, writing is graded for demonstrating mastery of course content as well as improvement of writing skills over time (for example: requiring students to submit multiple drafts of their term papers in upper-level courses).

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
100	Introduction to Philosophy	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	In-class writing (150-250 words) (WTL) Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers, popular articles
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short essays on exams (WTC)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
101	Critical Thinking	Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short essays on exams (WTC)	Introduced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers, popular articles
110	Reasoning and the Law	Interpret philosophical and legal texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles, textbook, popular articles, Supreme Court opinions
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short essays on exams (WTC)	Introduced	
122	Contemporary Moral Issues	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers, textbook, popular articles
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short essays on exams (WTC)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
223	Philosophy of Art	Understand, interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL) Written summaries of oral report presentations and debate arguments (WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain and apply key theories of art covered in the course.	Thesis paper (1400-1700 words) applying two theories of art to a specific work and arguing which one better explains the work (WTL and WTC)	Introduced	
232	Philosophies of Love	Understand, interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL) Written summaries of oral report presentation	Introduced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
240	Philosophy and the Good Life		s and debate arguments (WTL)		Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers, textbook, popular articles
		Explain and apply key theories of art covered in the course.	Thesis paper (1400-1700 words) summarizing and critiquing at least one philosophy of love covered in the course (WTL and WTC)	Introduced	
		Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Introduced	
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short essays on exams (WTC)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
270	Ethics and the Environment	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses assigned to readings and short in-class assignments (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, news/investigative articles
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	3 Short papers (1000-1250 words) (WTC)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles
		Articulate and explain ethical issues in real-world cases to a general audience.	3 Application papers (500 words) (WTC)	Introduced	News articles
		Write (with a group) a case study on an environmental issue and then (individually) defend or critique the solution posed in the case study. Learn how to find and use secondary sources.	Case Study and critique/defense (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	Case studies, scholarly articles

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
320	Ethical Theory	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
323	Political Philosophy	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
324	Ancient Greek Philosophy	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	One-page homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Primary texts from canonical philosophers, textbook, popular articles
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles from discipline specific journals
		Develop critical writing skills through peer edits	Peer-editing of others' term papers (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
325	Early Modern European Philosophy	Explain key ideas, problems, and arguments discussed in the course.	Short, weekly papers (250 - 500 words) (WTC)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Give textually grounded exposition of primary texts. Develop and defend an interpretive thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Longer mid-term and end of term papers (1500 - 2000 words) (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
326	Existentialism	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
329	Philosophy of Religion	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
330	Philosophy of Science	Explain key ideas, problems, and arguments discussed in the course.	Short, weekly papers (250 - 500 words) (WTC)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from recent and canonical philosophers
		Give textually grounded exposition of primary texts. Develop and defend an interpretive thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Term paper (2000 - 2500 words) (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
350	The Human Experience of Time	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	One-page homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Primary texts from canonical philosophers, textbook, popular articles
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles from discipline specific journals

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
		use secondary sources.			
		Develop critical writing skills through peer edits	Peer-editing of others' term papers (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
360	Philosophy of Mind	Interpret philosophical texts through writing.	Weekly papers on assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Thesis paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
390	Philosophy of Human Nature	Interpret philosophical texts through writing.	Weekly papers on assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, popular articles, trade books, primary texts from canonical

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
420		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	philosophers
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Thesis paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
	Metaphysics	Interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	One-page homework responses to assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Primary texts from canonical philosophers, textbook, popular articles
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Research paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	Scholarly articles from discipline specific journals

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
		Develop critical writing skills through peer edits	Peer-editing of others' term papers (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
421	Theory of Knowledge	Understand, interpret and critique philosophical texts through writing.	Short homework responses to assigned readings (WTL) Written summaries of oral report presentations and debate arguments (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, primary texts from canonical philosophers
		Explain and apply key epistemologies covered in the course.	Two essay examinations in which students write one essay each (WTC) Two critical essays which explicate and critique one course reading (WTL and WTC)	Introduced	
450	Philosophy of Law	Interpret philosophical texts through writing.	Weekly papers on assigned readings	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, popular articles, trade books, primary texts from

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
460			(WTL)		canonical philosophers
		Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced	
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Thesis paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	
	Philosophy of Language	Interpret philosophical texts through writing.	Weekly papers on assigned readings (WTL)	Reinforced	Scholarly articles, popular articles, trade books, primary texts from canonical philosophers
	Explain key ideas and arguments discussed in the course.	Short papers (750-1000 words) (WTC)	Introduced		

Course	Title	Expected Writing Skills	Writing Activities	Introduced, Reinforced, Emphasized	Genres Modeled Through Reading
		Develop and defend a novel philosophical thesis over the length of longer paper using material covered in the course. Learn how to find and effectively use secondary sources.	Thesis paper (WTC and WTL)	Introduced	

Appendix A – Writing Assessment of PHIL Seniors

We currently use three different forms of assessment that, at least in part, track the writing proficiency of PHIL majors and their thoughts on the instruction they have received with regard to writing:

1. At the end of every 300- or 400-level course, the instructor of the course scores the term papers of junior and senior PHIL majors according to a rubric specifically designed to measure the eight different aspects of good philosophical writing listed in Section 2 above.
2. Every graduating senior is encouraged to complete a Qualtrics survey regarding their experience as a PHIL major at IUP. While this survey includes many questions that do not directly bear on writing, it does include some questions specifically focusing on students' opinions of their instruction related to writing in philosophy courses and gives them space to give open-ended responses that often lead to some reflection on how their writing skills have improved as a result of majoring in philosophy. This gives us some indirect assessment of the writing instruction that we are providing.

In order to achieve more uniformity in the scoring of the rubrics for essays in upper-level courses, we will, in our May 2019 round of assessment, have two faculty members read and score each set of papers. Faculty members teaching upper-level courses will be responsible for collecting and anonymizing term papers for all junior and senior PHIL majors in their courses. The faculty member teaching the course will score all such papers according to the rubric, and the department outcomes assessment coordinator will also score the papers according to the rubric. The outcomes assessment coordinator will record the average scores for all papers.

The rubric below is used to assess a convenience sample of PHIL seniors enrolled in all 300- and 400-level PHIL courses.

Philosophy WRITING Assessment Rubric

Numerical scores are assigned using a (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0/0) scale, where the level of ability demonstrated in the paper is:

5 = excellent; 4 = very good; 3 = good; 2 = fair; 1 = poor; 0 = not applicable

Criteria measured include:

Definitions/explanations of concepts
Explanation of thesis
Overall defense of thesis
Novelty in construction of argument

Last Updated December 14, 2018

Exposition of arguments
Exposition/selection of objections
Replies to objections
Textual Grounding

Appendix B – Baseline Results of Writing Assessment

The data below are considered “baseline” survey results from the first assessment of student writing samples performed in fall 2017 of seniors enrolled in three courses in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Students are considered to be meeting expectations for graduating seniors when their writing is scored 5 (excellent) or 4 (every good).

Areas in which student writing is ABOVE expectations: 77+

None

Areas in which student writing is MEETING expectations: 68-77

None

Areas in which student writing is BELOW expectations (67 and below)

Criterion 1: Definitions/explanations of concepts

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	58% (29% / 29%)	19%	24% (10% / 14%)
	77% = excellent, very good, good		
		43% good, fair, poor	

Criterion 2: Explanation of Thesis

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	47% (14% / 33%)	14%	38% (24% / 14%)
	61% = excellent, very good, good		
		52% good, fair, poor	

Criterion 3: Defense of Thesis

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	29% (19% / 10%)	24%	48% (29% / 19%)
	53% = excellent, very good, good		
		72% good, fair, poor	

Criterion 4: Novelty in Construction of Argument

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor

n = 21	47% (24% / 19%)	19%	38% (14% / 24%)
	66% = excellent, very good, good		
		56% = good, fair, poor	

Criterion 5: Exposition of Arguments

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	38% (14% / 24%)	24%	38% (19% / 19%)
	62% = excellent, very good, good		
		62% = good, fair, poor	

Criterion 6: Exposition/Selection of Objections

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	29% (0% / 29%)	5%	67% (19% / 48%)
	34% = excellent, very good, good		
		72% = good, fair, poor	

Criterion 7: Replies to Objections

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	29% (5% / 24%)	5%	67% (10% / 57%)
	34% = excellent, very good, good		
		72% = good, fair, poor	

Criterion 8: Textual Grounding

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
n = 21	45% (30% / 15%)	25%	30% (20% / 10%)
	70% = excellent, very good, good		
		55% = good, fair, poor	

Discussion of Assessment Results with Recommendations, by the WAC Director

Based on assessment results of the current curriculum in Philosophy (before any WAC curriculum has been implemented) students appear to be *struggling to meet expectations* for writing in all areas the department is measuring. It should be noted, however, that the sample size was small (n=21), and only one faculty member rated the samples. A full assessment to be done in May 2019 of one full year of students will most likely yield more consistent and reliable results, especially if a second or third faculty member were willing to rate the samples as well, thus providing the ability to ensure rater reliability.

The department did not assign a holistic score to the samples. A holistic score sometimes allows for comparisons to individual criterion and allows a more reliable picture of students' strengths and struggles. The department might also consider removing the "good" rating level, thus forcing raters to choose whether students are meeting expectations or are below expectations, rather than having the option to place them directly in the middle. A four- or six-point scale would allow for more accurate differentiation.

Score tabulations in gray in the tables above indicate areas for faculty to take particular note. For instance, if the "good" samples are combined with the "excellent" and "very good" in **definitions/explanations of concepts** and **textual grounding**, then we see that student writing is meeting or exceeding expectations in those areas. These are primarily content areas, indicating that students are getting a strong foundation in philosophical content and are able to demonstrate their understanding of philosophical texts in their writing. Students are struggling the most in **defense of thesis, exposition/selection of objections**, and **replies to objections**. These are rhetorical areas, indicating that while students may be able to demonstrate knowledge of philosophy, they are finding it a challenge to make arguments about that content knowledge.

Over the next year, faculty should consider looking back through the course map developed in this document to find courses where they can add activities to help students increase performance in those rhetorical areas: **defense of thesis, exposition/selection of objections**, and **replies to objections**. It should be noted that students struggle with this across the board, not only in philosophy. The department should consider professional development, workshops, or other resources to support teaching these rhetorical elements and to support student writing.