

Ethics Minor

Knowledge and Application of Ethical Principles

Goal Description:

Students participating in the Ethics Minor will gain an understanding of ethical theories and develop skills related to ethical decision making and providing ethical arguments.

Providing Department: Ethics Minor

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Understanding Ethical Theory and Its Applications

Learning Objective Description:

As students progress through the Ethics Minor, they will acquire a basic understanding of ethical theory and its applications. As part of this work, they will be introduced to meta ethical questions. The basic information, provided by our introductory courses, serves as the foundation for student success in upper-division courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

PHIL 2306 Assessment

Indicator Description:

All students in PHIL 2306 will be tested on their knowledge of basic concepts in metaethics, 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.

Following a review of the 2306 assessment, faculty updated the assessment to to improve the clarity of question stems and to make it better correspond to how the courses were currently being taught by various faculty. Here is the rationale given by the assessment team:

Our overall goal was to improve the pre-/post-test by helping it to more accurately reflect PHIL 2306 as it is currently taught in our program. We eliminated questions that were confusingly worded, duplicated each other in terms of content area, or reflected content that is no longer regularly taught in a wide variety of PHIL 2306 sections. We revised questions that asked about relevant content but were confusingly worded. And we added questions that reflected widely taught content and were capable of providing a measure of students' general grasp of ethical theories and their applications to contemporary issues commonly covered in this course. Our goal in making these changes is to more accurately measure students' progress in learning core ethical theories and their application to central contemporary ethical debates as this aligns with current program curriculum.

The Philosophy Program will review the results to identify areas for potential improvement in student learning outcomes.

Attached is the revised assessment used in both Fall and Spring Semesters

Attached Files

 [Phil 2306 Assessment 2022 Revised Version.pdf](#)

Criterion Description:

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 will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

Findings Description:

Our goal of demonstrating a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test was achieved. This was seen in both the the online and face-to-face populations, as well as in the cumulative population of students as a whole.

The average student score in face-to-face section of Phil 2306 showed a increased from 58.38% to 70.88%, for an increase of 12.50%. This increase was statistically significant ($p < .001$)

The average student score in online sections of Phil 2306 showed an increase from 58.64% to 68.86%, for an increase of 10.23%. This increase was statistically significant ($p < .001$)

Students enrolled across all sections of Phil 2306 showed an increase in test scores from 58.53% to 69.74%, for an increase of 11.22%. This increase was statistically significant ($p < .001$)

See attached for an analysis helpfully prepared by the office of assessment.

Attached Files

 [PHIL 2306 2022-2023_Report.pdf](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

PHIL 2306 Assessment

Action Description:

In AY 2021-2022 the Philosophy faculty made updates to the Phil 2306 assessment. The Program instituted this new, updated version of the assessment in all sections of Phil 2306 in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

In AY 2022-23 we were successful in showing a statistically significant improvement on the Phil 2306 assessment.

In AY 2023-24 We will again aim for a statistically significant improvement in post- test scores when compared to pre- test scores.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Phil 2303 Assessment

Indicator Description:

Critical thinking is a key component in moral reasoning. 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), 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.

Criterion Description:

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.

Findings Description:

Our goal of demonstrating a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test was not achieved. We did not see a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to post-test.

A statistically significant improvement *was* seen in the test scores for students in face-to-face sections of Phil 2303 (32.40% to 35.67%, for an increase of 3.27%; $p = .061$).

Students in online sections of Phil 2303 showed a decrease in test scores, but not one that was statistically significant (33.37% to 29.90%, for a decrease of 3.47%; $p = .060$).

The aggregate of students in both face-to-face and online sections of Phil 2306 showed a slight decrease in test scores, but not one that was statistically significant (32.89% to 32.79%, for a decrease of 0.10%; $p = .940$).

See attached for a report prepared by the office of assessment.

Attached Files

 [PHIL 2303 \(TACTS\) 2022-2023 Report.pdf](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - PHIL 2303 Assessment

Action Description:

In AY 2022-23, the Phil 2303 assessment showed an increase in student post-assessment scores compared to pre-assessment scores for students enrolled in face-to face sections; however, this improvement was not statistically significant.

Students enrolled in online sections of Phil 2303 showed a *decrease* in performance on the post-assessment compared to their pre-assessment scores. Again, this difference was not statistically significant.

In FY 2023-24 we will aim for a statistically significant improvement in post- test scores when compared to pre- test scores for students in Phil 2303.

The ethics minor program coordinator will reevaluate the Phil 2303 assessment, and consider strategies for improving it.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Phil 4363 Assessment

Indicator Description:

During the fall semester of 2021, the new Phil 4363 assessment instrument was deployed as a pre-assessment in the first week of class and as a post-assessment in the last week of class. This tool was built to measure student learning of advanced moral principles and concepts covered in Ethical Theories. A copy of the instrument and rubric used to grade it are attached.

In the summer of 2022, faculty made revisions to this document, primarily aimed at improving the assessment's clarity and ability to measure student learning. The following changes were made:

- The first question with three subparts was completely deleted. The question was too vague and poorly worded, leading to student confusion about what the question was asking, exactly. In fall 2021, many students provided correct content clearly learned in the class, but were misinterpreting what the prompt was asking. Because the content of the question was generally captured by other questions, it was decided that the question was not needed.
- The fifth question about Kant was changed to make it a more general question about deontology (in the new version of the assessment it is the fourth question). The Kant version of the question had too much detail in it, which was giving away the answer to students. It also was too

specific. If future faculty of Phil 4363 decide not to assign Kant, the question won't be helpful for assessing student understanding of deontology.

- A question was added to the end: "With a simple “yes” or “no”, have you previously taken a course that covers ethical theory?" This question was added to make it possible to compare students who have studied ethics before to those who have not.

The revised version of the assessment has also been attached.

The revised assessment will be given as a pre- and post-test to Phil 4363 in Fall Semester of 2022.

The Philosophy Program will review the results to identify areas for potential improvement in student learning outcomes. The program faculty will also identify and execute any improvements that can be made to the new Phil 4363 assessment tool as necessary.

Attached Files

 [Phil 4363 Assessment.docx](#)

 [Phil 4363 Assessment Rubric.docx](#)

 [Phil 2306 Assessment 2022 Revised Version.pdf](#)

Criterion Description:

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

Findings Description:

Our goal of demonstrating a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test was achieved.

A total of 27 students took the pre-test and 21 students took the post-test (out of a total of 30 enrolled in the course). Of these students, 18 took *both* the pre- and post- test. All statistical analyses were performed only on those students who took both pre-and post-tests.

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre- to post-test scores for students enrolled in Phil 4363 in Fall 2022. The average student score on the pre-test was 10.14 out of 35 (29%); the average student score on the post-test was 24.03 out of 35 (69%). This difference amounts to an average increase of 13.89 points (40%) from pre- to post-test. This is a statistically significant increase ($p = 1.13^{-07}$).

Attached is an in-depth analysis of the data prepared by the Ethics Minor program coordinator as well as a spreadsheet with the hard data.

Attached Files

 [Phil 4363 Assessment Report Fall 2022.pdf](#)

 [2022 Phil 4363 Assessment Data.xlsx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Phil 4363 Assessment

Action Description:

The ethics minor program was successful in its goal of showing a statistically significant improvement on the Phil 4363 assessment.

For the 2022-23 school year, the ethics minor will again aim to show a statistically significant improvement on the Phil 4363 assessment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Improve student participation in online sections

Performance Objective Description:

Student participation in pre- and post- assessments of online sections of courses has been lower than student participation in face-to-face sections. Faculty will create strategies to increase student participation in online sections.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improve Student Participation in Phil 2303 Student Assessment

KPI Description:

Online Phil 2303 faculty will actively encourage students via email to participate in the Phil 2303 assessment.

Target Description:

Our target for success is a 10% improvement in online student participation in the pre- and post-assessment.

Results Description:

We did not succeed in our goal of a 10% improvement in online student participation in the pre- and post-assessment for Phil 2303. In fact, we did not see any improvement. Instead, online participation in the Phil 2303 assessment decreased 1%. In the 2021-2022 school year, 19% of Phil 2303 online students participated in both the pre- and post- assessment. In the 2022-23 school year 18% of Phil 2303 online students participated in both the pre- and post-assessments.

We saw an even larger decrease (15%) in face-to-face participation. In the 2021-2022 school year, 28% of face-to-face Phil 2303 students participated in the pre- and post-assessments. in the 2022-2023 school year 13% of face-to face Phil 2303 students participated in the pre- and post-assessment.

Though participation levels in online sections of Phil 2303 during the 2022-23 school year decreased 1%, the participation in online sections of Phil 2303 was *greater* than participation in face-to-face sections of Phil 2303.

MODALITY	PARTICIPATION %- 2021-2022	PARTICIPTION % 2022-23	DIFFERENCE
F2F	28%	13%	-15%
ONLN	19%	18%	-1%
TOTAL	25%	15%	-9%

Attached is a spreadsheet with enrollment data compared to participation data for Phil 2303. The enrollment data was collected from the Banner class schedule. The participation data was collected from the assessment reports for Phil 2303 collected by the Office of Assessment and Planning.

Attached Files

 [Assessment Participation data.xlsx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Improve Student Participation in Phil 2303 Assessment

Action Description:

Faculty teaching Phil 2303 will continue deploying strategies to increase student participation in Phil 2303 Assessment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improve Student Participation in Phil 2306 Student Assessment

KPI Description:

Online Phil 2306 faculty will actively encourage students via email to participate in the Phil 2306 assessment.

Target Description:

Our target for success is a 10% improvement in online student participation in the pre- and post-assessment.

Results Description:

We achieved our goal of achieving a 10% improvement in online student participation in the pre-and post-assessment for Phil 2306.

In school year 2021-2022, online student participation in the pre-and post assessment was only 3%. In the school year 2022-2023 participation increased to 28%. In fact, in the 2022-2023 school year, online student participation in the pre- and post-assessment was *larger* in online sections of Phil 2306 than in face-to-face sections of Phil 2306.

We saw an overall improvement in participation across all sections of 17%.

MODALITY	PARTICIPATION %- 2021-2022	PARTICIPTION % 2022-23	DIFFERENCE
F2F	16%	24%	9%
ONLN	3%	28%	25%
TOTAL	9%	26%	17%

Attached is a spreadsheet with enrollment data compared against participation data. The participation data was collected from the Banner class schedule information. The participation data was collected from the Office of Assessment and Planning assessment report for Phil 2306.

Attached Files

 [Assessment Participation data.xlsx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Improve Participation in 2306 Assessment

Action Description:

Faculty will continue employing strategies to maintain high student participation in the Phil 2306 assessment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improve Student Participation in Phil 4363 Student Assessment

KPI Description:

Because Phil 4363 is a writing heavy course, and because the assessment involves additional writing, faculty will offer extra credit points for participation in both the pre- and post- assessment.

Target Description:

Our target for success is a 25% improvement in student participation in the pre- and post-assessment.

Results Description:

Faculty teaching Phil 4363 offered 3% points extra credit for students who took both the pre- and post- test.

18 of 30 students (60%) took both tests in Fall 2022.

In Fall 2021, 13 of 23 students (57%) took both tests.

While there was an improvement year over year in the percentage of students who took the test, it was small and below our target.

It is unclear why so few students took both the pre-and post tests. Reminder emails were consistently sent to students making clear that students would receive extra credit. We hypothesize that unless the assessment is made a course requirement, participation will continue to be poor. However, we are reluctant to make the assessment a requirement, as we worry that this will incentivize students to use notes or cheat, thus spoiling the data.

That being said, the 57% enrollment in the Phil 4363 assessment was much higher than the participation rate for Phil 2303 (15%) and Phil 2306 (26%).

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Improve participation in Phil 4363 assessment

Action Description:

Faculty teaching Phil 4363 will continue employing strategies to maintain high student participation in Phil 4363 assessment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Increase student learning in Phil 4363

Performance Objective Description:

Phil 4363 faculty will try a new teaching technique in Phil 4363 in an attempt to increase student learning.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Employ retrieval practice in Phil 4363 to improve student learning

KPI Description:

Faculty in Phil 4363 will employ low-stakes, regularly scheduled retrieval practice in an effort to improve student learning and retention of information in the course.

Target Description:

Our target for success is to show a statistically significant improvement in student learning compared to Fall 2021. We will measure this by comparing scores for students who took both the pre- and post test in Fall 2021 to the scores for students who took both the pre- and post-test in Fall 2022.

Results Description:

Our target for success was achieved. Fall 2022 showed a statistically significant improvement in student learning compared to Fall 2021 students.

The assessment data collected for Phil 4363 in the Fall 2022 semester was compared with the assessment data collected for Phil 4363 in the Fall 2021 semester.

In Fall 2021, students showed an increase in test score of 20% (from 42% to 62%). This result was statistically significant ($p = 0.01816782$).

In Fall 2022, students showed an increase in test score of 40% (29% to 49%). This result was also statistically significant ($p = 1.13^{-07}$).

The Fall 2022 class increased their scores by 20% more than the Fall 2021 class. A two-sample unequal variance T-Test revealed that this difference was statistically significant ($p = .003521501$).

See Appendix 3 of the attached assessment report for an discussion. A spreadsheet with the data is also attached.

Attached Files

 [2022 Phil 4363 Assessment Data.xlsx](#)

 [Phil 4363 Assessment Report Fall 2022.pdf](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Employ retrieval practice in Phil 4363 to improve student learning

Action Description:

We saw a statistically significant improvement on the Phil 4363 assessment in Fall 2022 compared with Fall 2021. There are various factors that are different between the Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 populations that could explain this result:

(a) The assessment instrument itself was overhauled. The newly designed instrument may be better constructed to measure students learning than the previous assessment instrument. One datum point in favor of this explanation is that the *pre*-assessment score in Fall 2022 was significantly lower than the Fall 2021 *pre*-assessment score.

(b) One important difference between the Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 sections of Phil 4363 is that in Fall 2022 the faculty member offering that class employed regularly scheduled retrieval practice. Pedagogical literature suggests that regular retrieval practice greatly increases information retention and learning of content.

(c) The student populations in Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 are of course different. As discussed on point (a) above, students in the Fall 2022 section of Phil 4363 scored significantly lower on the pre-assessment than students in the Fall 2021 section of Phil 4363. Perhaps the explanation for this is not that the the Fall 2021 assessment instrument was noisier than the Fall 2022 assessment, but rather that the students in Fall 2021 entered the course with more content knowledge than students in Fall 2022. If this is the case, than we would expect students in Fall 2021 to have *learned* less (since they entered the course knowing more).

Given that we have no way of conclusively ruling out (a) and (c) as being the explanation for better improvement found in students in Fall 2022, we cannot be sure that using retrieval practice is what explains the better improvement found in students in Fall 2022.

That being said, the faculty member teaching Phil 4363 in Fall 2023 will continue to use regularly scheduled retrieval practice.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Closing Summary

1. Deploy newly updated Phil 2306 assessment beginning Fall 2022 and gather data in all sections of Phil 2306.
2. Deploy newly updated Phil 4363 assessment in Fall 2022 section of course.
3. Continue to collect data on assessments for Phil 2303, 2306, and 4363.
4. Create strategies for increasing student participation in online sections of Phil 2303.
5. Create strategies for increasing student participation in online sections of Phil 2306.
6. Create strategies for increasing student participation in online sections of Phil 4363.

7. Identify teaching techniques to implement in Phil 4363 to increase student learning and retainment of information.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

We were successful in implementing all items listed in the previous cycle's plan for continuous improvement.

1. We deployed the newly updated Phil 2306 assessment in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.
2. We deployed the newly updated Phil 4363 assessment in the Fall 2022 section of the course.
3. A collected data on assessments for Phil 2303, 2306, and 4363.
4. We created strategies for increasing student participation in our online sections. Some professors offered extra credit to incentivize students participation. All professors sent out reminder emails to students. These efforts were not entirely successful. While student participation increased 25% in online sections of Phil 2306, participation increased only 3% for Phil 4363, and decreased by 1% for Phil 2303.
5. The faculty member teaching Phil 4363 in Fall 2022 deployed regular retrieval practice. We saw an increase of student learning on the Fall 2023 assessment compared to the Fall 2022 assessment.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

In AY 2023-24, the Ethics Minor program faculty will do the following:

1. Continue to collect data on assessments for Phil 2303, 2306, and 4363
2. Continue employing strategies for increasing student participation in online sections of Phil 2303, 2306, and 4363.

In addition, the Ethics Minor program coordinator will do the following:

1. Reevaluate the Phil 2303 assessment tool. If the 2303 assessment tool is found to no longer accurately reflect what faculty are currently teaching in Phil 2303, or if the assessment tool is found to be defective in some other way, the Ethics Minor program coordinator will begin the process of revising the assessment tool.