

Philosophy BA
Assessment Plan Summary

Philosophy BA

Implementation of new PHIL 2352 assessment instrument

Goal Description:

PHIL 2352 will be assessed using our newly developed instrument in a pre-test/post-test format.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS-----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Deployment of Pre-test and Post-test in PHIL 2352

Performance Objective Description:

Program faculty will administer the new pre-test and post-test in all sections of PHIL 2352.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Deployment of PHIL 2352 Pre-/Post-test

KPI Description:

The instructors in all sections of PHIL 2352 will administer the pre-test and post-test beginning in Fall 2016.

Results Description:

The pre-test and post-test were administered in both sections of PHIL 2352 during 2015-2016. However, in the online section, a serious issue relating to a low student response meant that despite incorporating the pre-test and post-test into the course design, no useful data was gathered from the Spring 2016 online section.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Pre-test/Post-test Assessment of PHIL 2352

Action Description:

The Program Coordinator and the faculty member responsible for teaching PHIL 2352 on-line have consulted with members of the SHSU Online support staff. Based on the recommendations of SHSU Online, both assessment instruments will be integrated into the course in a manner that requires the students to complete the assessments before moving on to some other element of the course. The professor will take responsibility for working with SHSU Online to determine the most effective manner of accomplishing this in a way that balances the need for assessment data against potential disruptions to delivery of course materials.

Improving Critical Thinking And Analytic Reasoning

Goal Description:

Students completing the critical thinking and logic courses in our curriculum will develop a broad-based skills in critical thinking and formal logic.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS-----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Critical Thinking Skills

Learning Objective Description:

Critical thinking skills are an essential component of philosophical work. Students will be able to analyze arguments and draw conclusions from available information.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improved Calculation of Linked Probabilities

Indicator Description:

Students will demonstrate an improvement in their ability to calculate linked probabilities from the start of the course to the end of the course, and students will demonstrate a skill level on this task that surpasses that of students in a senior-level College of Business course.

Criterion Description:

The percentage of students who correctly answer question 23 on the TACTS instrument will increase by at least 150% from the pre-test to the post-test. Further, the percentage of students who correctly answer question 23 on the post-test will exceed 50%. This target was chosen because the creators of the TACTS report that less than 40% of students in a senior-level College of Business course answered question 23 correctly. The Program will consider its efforts to improve student performance in this area a success if students show substantial improvement and the end-of-course assessment shows that students in this general education course are performing better than senior-level students have historically performed.

Findings Description:

Among the 533 students who took the pre-test, 87 (16.3%) answered question 23 correctly. Among the 449 students who took the post-test, 255 (56.8%) answered question 23 correctly. These results indicate an increase of over 200% in the number of students who answered question 23 correctly. Further, the post-test result that 56.8% of students answered question 23 correctly indicates that students completing this general education course did better on this task than senior-level business students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Course and Assessment Review

Action Description:

Although the 2015-2016 assessment demonstrates that the Program met its criteria for success, the small overall effect size from the pre-test to the post-test is a concern. In order to gather data that can be used to improve specific aspects of student learning, the Program faculty will identify specific questions on the TACT that align with agreed upon learning outcomes. This will allow for a more straightforward alignment between desired outcomes and student performance. It will facilitate targeted assessment of specific learning outcomes and the opportunity to identify specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as improve alignment across multiple sections of the course.

Faculty teaching on-line sections of PHIL 2303 will work with SHSU Online to capture data concerning student performance on individual questions to ensure uniform assessment across both on-line and in-person sections of the course.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Response Scores On TACTS

Indicator Description:

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. A copy of the current TACTS is attached. A copy of the credited responses is attached. The Philosophy Program Coordinator 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. Dr. Sanford will be responsible for gathering pre- and post-test data from the faculty members who teach PHL 2303.

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:

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between in the pre- to post-scores for students enrolled in PHIL 2303: Critical Thinking for the 2015-2016 academic year, $t(393) = -6.89, p < .001$. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.42 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 35.70% to 40.50%, for an increase of approximately 5%. Readers are directed to Table 1 for a breakdown of these results.

Attached Files

 [Texas Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills 2015-2016 Report](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Course and Assessment Review

Action Description:

Although the 2015-2016 assessment demonstrates that the Program met its criteria for success, the small overall effect size from the pre-test to the post-test is a concern. In order to gather data that can be used to improve specific aspects of student learning, the Program faculty will identify specific questions on the TACT that align with agreed upon learning outcomes. This will allow for a more straightforward alignment between desired outcomes and student performance. It will facilitate targeted assessment of specific learning outcomes and the opportunity to identify specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as improve alignment across multiple sections of the course.

Faculty teaching on-line sections of PHIL 2303 will work with SHSU Online to capture data concerning student performance on individual questions to ensure uniform assessment across both on-line and in-person sections of the course.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Formal Logic Skills

Learning Objective Description:

Formal reasoning is a highly regarded component of philosophical work. Students will be able to analyze formal arguments and construct formal proofs.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Formal Arguments and Proofs

Indicator Description:

All students in PHIL 2352 will be tested on their knowledge of basic concepts in formal logic using a locally standardized pre-test and post-test for each section. 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 analysis of formal arguments and construction of formal proofs. The attached document provide the assessment instrument for PHIL 2352.

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:

The pre-test and post-test were administered in both sections of PHIL 2352 during 2015-2016. However, in the on-line section, a serious issue relating to a low student response meant that despite incorporating the pre-test and post-test into the course design, no useful data was gathered from the Spring 2016 on-line section.

Among the 11 students who took the pre-test and post-test, the average score rose from 3.8 to 9.4, based on the paired t-test, the gains were statistically significant. Data and basic analysis are attached.

Attached Files

 [PHIL 2352 Pre-Post Data](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Formal Logic Skill Assessment

Action Description:

The Program Coordinator and the faculty member responsible for teaching PHIL 2352 on-line have in consulted with members of the SHSU Online support staff Based on the recommendations of SHSU Online, both assessment instruments will be integrated into the course in a manner that requires the students to complete the assessments before moving on to some other element of the course. The professor will take responsibility for working with SHSU Online to determine the most effective manner of accomplishing this in a way that balances the need for assessment data against potential disruptions to delivery of course materials.

Given the small sample size (n=11), the Program is not taking any actions relating to student learning at this point. The program will review the data gathered during 2016-2017 in conjunction with existing data in an attempt to identify areas for future improvement.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Develop Instrument for Assessing Metacognitive Judgement in PHIL 2303

Performance Objective Description:

The ability to evaluate one's own knowledge and skills is an essential part of critical thinking and decision making. In order to better understand this understudied component of critical thinking, the Program has encouraged Dr. Sanford and Dr. Wright to work with Jeff Roberts, SHSU's Director of Assessment, to advance their research in this area by promoting the development and future deployment of an instrument for assessing students' metacognitive performance.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Development of an Instrument for Measuring Students' Metacognitive Abilities

KPI Description:

The Program will consider the efforts of Dr. Sanford and Dr. Wright and Jeff Roberts, SHSU's Director of Assessment, to be successful if they are able to gain IRB approval for use of their instrument in classes no later than Fall 2016.

Results Description:

IRB approval for research using the instrument was granted in April 2016.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Begin Assessing Students' Metacognitive Abilities

Action Description:

Professors Sanford and Wright will work with Jeff Roberts, SHSU's Director of Assessment, to begin gathering preliminary data on students' metacognitive abilities during 2016-2017. The primary aim of this work will be to validate their instrument and methods as a foundation for future use in curricular design.

Review/Revise Assessment Instrument for PHIL 2306

Goal Description:

Given that the program has used the same instrument for pre-test/post-test assessment in PHIL 2306 sections for several years, all faculty who currently teach this course will be invited to serve on a committee charged with reviewing (and revising, as necessary) this instrument to ensure adequate assessment of current controversies and pedagogical approaches. The committee will make a recommendation to the Program faculty. The Program faculty will act on these recommendations in adopting an instrument for future use in assessment of PHIL 2306 sections.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Review of PHIL 2306 Assessment Instrument

Performance Objective Description:

The Program faculty will undertake a review (and revision, if necessary) of the assessment instrument for PHIL 2306. This review will focus on ensuring shared learning outcomes across all sections, Core Curriculum requirements, and student preparation for upper-division philosophy courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Review/Revision of PHIL 2306 Assessment Instrument

KPI Description:

The Program faculty are expected to complete a review of the assessment instrument for PHIL 2306 in time to allow for use of the revised instrument beginning in Fall 2016. The committee will revise the instrument by adding questions, removing questions, or rewriting questions as need to ensure that the items on the instrument align with expected student learning outcomes.

Results Description:

The committee reviewed the existing instrument and proposed multiple question revisions aimed at reducing ambiguity. In addition, the committee recommended replacing a small number of questions to reflect changes to the course content since the creation of the old instrument. These changes in course content are necessitated by the temporal requirements teaching "contemporary moral issues."

The committee complete all revisions and the final instrument was approved by the Program faculty before the start of Fall 2016 classes.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Implementation of Revised PHIL 2306 Assessment Instrument

Action Description:

The Program faculty completed their review and revision of the assessment instrument for PHIL 2306. During 2016-2017, the Program will begin assessing all sections of PHIL 2306 with the revised assessment instrument.

To ensure test security, the revised instrument is not posted herein. Individuals interested in receiving a copy should contact the Philosophy Program Coordinator.

Understanding Of General Philosophical Concepts

Goal Description:

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

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Advanced Understanding Of History Of Philosophy

Learning Objective Description:

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.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Pre-test Post-test Response Scores On Locally-Standardized Instruments (3364/3365)

Indicator Description:

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

Findings Description:

The 9 students in PHIL 3364 who took both the pre-test and post-test improved their average scores from 2.33 to 10.67 correct responses. This was a statistically significant improvement.

The 20 students in PHIL 3365 who took both the pre-test and post-test improved their average scores from 2.55 to 15.15 correct responses. This was a statistically significant improvement.

The data and descriptive statistics are attached.

Attached Files

[!\[\]\(4c3510be7e062b88b134d9fe870478aa_img.jpg\) PHIL 3364 & 3365 Pre-Post Scores](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

PHIL 3364/3365 Action

Action Description:

The Program will continue to gather data on the overall student outcomes in PHIL 3364/3365. In addition, the Program will begin collecting and reporting student responses on each question of the assessment instruments. This is expected to enable a more fine-grained analysis of student performance in specific areas.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Basic Understanding Of Core Concepts In Philosophy

Learning Objective Description:

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.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improved Student Knowledge Of Kant

Indicator Description:

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.

Criterion Description:

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.

Findings Description:

IN-PERSON SECTIONS

In the PHIL 2361 in-person sections, 351 students took the pre-test and 263 took the post-test. The breakdown of student pre-test/post test performance on the Kant questions was:

Question 10: Pre-test correct: 117 (33.3%) Post-test correct: 113 (43.0%)

Question 12: Pre-test correct: 206 (58.7%) Post-test correct: 119 (45.2%)

ON-LINE SECTIONS

In the PHIL 2361 on-line sections, 44 students took the pre-test and 50 took the post-test. The breakdown of student pre-test/post test performance on the Kant questions was:

Question 10: Pre-test correct: 16 (36.4%) Post-test correct: 27 (54.0%)

Question 12: Pre-test correct: 32 (58.7%) Post-test correct: 25 (50.0%)

The findings for our in-person and on-line PHIL 2361 sections appear to demonstrate a clear failure to achieve desired student learning outcomes with respect to student knowledge of Kant.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Knowledge of Kant Action

Action Description:

Recognizing a failure to meet the expected outcome has triggered a review of how PHIL 2361 (now PHIL 1301) was being taught. Early discussions indicate that faculty members have not been teaching Kant consistently across all sections. During Fall 2106, faculty members will work to establish consistent expectations of Kant coverage for PHIL 1301. In addition, the Program is scheduled to conduct a review of the assessment instrument used in PHIL 1301. As described elsewhere, this review will focus on ensuring shared learning outcomes across all sections, Core Curriculum requirements, and student preparation for upper-division philosophy courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Improved Student Knowledge Of The Death Penalty Debate

Indicator Description:

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.

Criterion Description:

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.

Findings Description:

IN-PERSON SECTIONS:

In the PHIL 2306 in-person sections, 544 students took the pre-test and 453 took the post-test. The breakdown of student pre-test/post-test performance was on the death penalty questions was:

Question 19:

Pre-test correct: 68 (12.5%) Post-test correct: 359 (79.2%)

Question 20:

Pre-test correct: 93 (17.1%) Post-test correct: 376 (83.0%)

ON-LINE SECTIONS

In the PHIL 2306 on-line sections, 103 students took the pre-test and 82 took the post-test. The breakdown of student pre-test/post-test performance was on the death penalty questions was:

Question 19:

Pre-test correct: 66 (64.1%) Post-test correct: 34 (41.5%)

Question 20:

Pre-test correct: 83 (80.6%) Post-test correct: 62 (75.6%)

Although our in-person PHIL 2306 sections met their criteria for success, the findings for our on-line PHIL 2306 sections appear to demonstrate a decline in student performance on student learning outcomes with respect to student knowledge of the death penalty over the course of these sections.

The Program faculty has some concerns about the data quality for the online sections of PHIL 2306 given the large disparity in pre-test scores between students in the on-line and in-person sections. It is suspicious that students in the on-line sections were over 4 times as likely to answer questions 19 and 20 correctly on the pre-test for PHIL 2306 when compared to in-person students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Knowledge of the Death Penalty Action

Action Description:

Given the success of our in-person sections of PHIL 2306 on student outcomes concerning knowledge of the death penalty, the program will focus its efforts on addressing the apparent failure to achieve similar success in our on-line sections.

First, the Program will consult with Madelyn Kilgore concerning the suspicious pattern of student performance on the pre- and post-tests in on-line sections of PHIL 2306.

Second, all instructors of on-line sections have been notified of the results and asked to work with instructors of in-person sections to ensure consistent coverage of this material backed by sound pedagogy.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Statistically Significant Improvement Of Student Scores From Pre-test To Post-test (2361/2306)

Indicator Description:

All students in PHIL 2361 and PHIL 2306 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 PHIL 2306 as well as the credited responses for each.

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

Findings Description:

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between in the pre- to post-scores for students enrolled in PHIL 2306: Contemporary Moral Issues for the 2015-2016 academic year, $t(412) = -19.23, p < .001$. This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 1.30 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 47.26% to 63.84%, for an increase of approximately 16%.

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between in the pre- to post-scores for students enrolled in PHIL 2361: Introduction to Philosophy for the 2015-2016 academic year, $t(222) = -11.448, p < .001$. This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 1.10 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 28.92% to 43.45%, for an increase of approximately 15%.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Review of PHIL 1301 and Implement of New Assessment Instrument in PHIL 2306.

Action Description:

The Program faculty are pleased that students in PHIL 2306 and PHIL 2361 demonstrated significant gains in their knowledge of general philosophical concepts. The Program is not planning any coordinated changes to how it teaches PHIL 2306 or PHIL 2361 for 2016-2017.

During 2015-2016, the Program faculty reviewed and revised the assessment instrument for PHIL 2306 in an effort to realign the instrument to evolutionary changes in the course and the faculty who teach it. During 2016-2017, the Program will begin assessing PHIL 2306 with this new instrument.

During 2016-2017, the Program faculty will undertake a review of the assessment instrument for PHIL 2361, which will henceforth be renumbered as PHIL 1301. This review will focus on ensuring shared learning outcomes across all sections, Core Curriculum requirements, and student preparation for upper-division philosophy courses.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

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

The Program will finalize an instrument for assessing metacognitive judgement in PHIL 2303.

The Program will continue gathering data on student outcomes in PHIL 3364 and 3365 in an effort to identify specific trends in those courses.

The Program will complete its review of the curricular goals and assessment instruments for PHIL 2306 and PHIL 2361.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

Professors Sanford and Wright finalized their instrument for assessing students' metacognitive abilities. In April 2016, they received IRB approval to begin collecting data from students enrolled in philosophy courses at SHSU.

The Program continued to gather data on students in PHIL 3364/3365. Given the small size of the sample, the Program will shift from simply assessing overall scores toward a more fine-grained analysis of specific questions in order to identify areas of concern.

The Program completed its review of PHIL 2306, but did not review the assessment instrument for PHIL 2361. Instead, the Program shifted its focus from reviewing the instrument for PHIL 2361 to collecting and reporting data on the relative performance of on-line and in-person sections of PHIL 2306 and PHIL 2361. The Program plans to continue to gather data on the relative performance of on-line and in-person sections of these courses. The Program will conduct its review of the curricular goals and assessment instruments for PHIL 1301 (formerly 2361) during 2016-2017.

Plan for Continuous Improvement (2015-2016)

Closing Summary:

The Program is committed to undertaking several actions aimed at ensuring the quality of instruction and concomitant student learn outcomes. During 2016-2017, the Program will:

1) ask all faculty teaching PHIL 1301, 2303, and 2306 to share ideas concerning effective techniques for achieving student learning outcomes with respect to specific targeted areas;

2) implement improved data gathering in on-line sections of PHIL 2352;

3) conduct a review of the TACTS instrument used in PHIL 2303 in order toin order to ensure alignment between the instrument, Core Curriculum requirements and future course offerings (As part of this review, the Program will identify specific questions from the instrument that align with course objectives in an effort to improve targeted assessment of PHIL 2303 offerings.);

4) will conduct a review of the PHIL 1301 assessment instrument in order to ensure alignment between the instrument, Core Curriculum requirements and future course offerings (As part of this review, the Program will identify specific questions from the instrument that align with course objectives in an effort to improve targeted assessment of PHIL 1301 offerings.);

5) will work with Professors Sanford and Wright, who will coordinate with Jeff Roberts, SHSU's Director of Assessment, to promote ongoing development of an instrument for assessing students' metacognitive capacities with respect to the skills taught in PHIL 2303; and

6) The Program will continue its efforts to assess the relative equivalence of on-line and in-person sections of all courses.