

# Philosophy B.A. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan (Fall 2018)

## I. Program Description

The Modern Languages, Philosophy, and Religion Department offers both a 30-credit major and an 18-credit minor in Philosophy. The 5 full-time faculty members in philosophy and religion teach a wide range of courses, covering most of the significant areas of Philosophy.

## II. Program-Specific Student Learning Outcomes

1. **Critical Thinking.** Above all, graduates of the philosophy major/minor learn to identify and assess arguments. They know and apply the concepts of “logical soundness” and “logical validity,” and are tested on their ability to analyze formal arguments (a formal argument is a series of numbered statements where a conclusion is derived from a premise or set of premises), as well as informal ones.
2. **Creative Critical Thinking.** Philosophy students are able to defend their own solutions to standard questions. They are tested on the coherence and persuasiveness of their views, as well as on whether the views take account of possible objections and existing competing theories.
3. **Mastery of History of Philosophy.** Philosophy graduates are able to articulate the views of major Western and non-Western philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant and Confucius, and to situate these views within their respective philosophical traditions.
4. **Writing Excellence.** Philosophy graduates also exhibit excellence in their written work, composing essays that are clear, concise, and rigorously argued. All Philosophy courses taught at ESU have writing components, and most courses at the Junior level or above are writing intensive, utilizing essay tests (typically a midterm and a final exam) and essay paper assignments (typically from ten to fifteen pages in total amount of written work).
5. **Awareness of a Diverse, Global Society.** Philosophy students know about philosophical traditions emerging from Europe and America as well as about those which have developed in other parts of the world, including the Middle East and Asia. On the whole, students demonstrate the ability to engage intellectually with diverse systems of thought.
6. **Ethical Competence.** Philosophy graduates are expected to learn the history of ethical philosophy as well as the basic deliberative procedures involved in making practical ethical decisions of one’s own. Students are also expected to be able to explain the justification of and need for ethical standards in contemporary society.

## III. Direct and Indirect Measures of Student Performance

Direct Measures:

In-class exams

In-class oral presentations  
Short essay assignments (3-5 pages)  
Long essay assignments (10-15 pages)  
Publications of undergraduates in undergraduate or graduate journals  
Presentations of undergraduates at undergraduate or graduate conferences

Indirect Measures:

Graduation rates  
Job placement  
Graduate school acceptance rates  
Publications of graduates in scholarly journals  
Presentations of graduates at academic conferences  
Retention and transfer rates

IV. Three-year Assessment Cycle Timeline

Data for the following direct and indirect measures will be collected on a yearly basis, at the end of the Spring semester, by the following faculty in our department:

Publications of undergraduates in undergraduate or graduate journals – Storm Heter  
Presentations of undergraduates at undergraduate or graduate conferences – Storm Heter

Graduation rates – Martin Weatherston  
Retention and transfer rates – Martin Weatherston

Job placement – Tim Connolly  
Graduate school acceptance rates – Tim Connolly

Publications of graduates in scholarly journals – Peter Pruim  
Presentations of graduates at academic conferences – Peter Pruim

Philosophy and Religious Studies faculty will meet before the beginning of each Fall semester to analyze and review the collected data. Assessment will be based on whatever previously existing data is available, with the goal of substantially improving on current numbers.