CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LONG BEACH
Core Competency Assessment
(rev. 9/2017)

Academic Year: 2017-2018
Degree Program Name:
Philosophy BA
Department Name: Philosophy

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1. Which WSCUC core competency for this degree program was assessed over the past year and how is it connected to your Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)?

Critical Thinking. This is a PLO for the Philosophy BA program, and it is in an SLO in every course offered in the department.

2. Briefly describe how these outcomes are linked to CSULB's Institutional learning outcomes (http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/assessment/institutional_objective.html).

This outcome is tied to the ILO that concentrates on critical thinking skills.

3. Briefly describe the direct assessment used to measure this competency.

For the first year of this assessment plan we decided to focus on assessing critical thinking outcomes in our newly designed hybrid classes for lower-division Critical Thinking. These hybrid courses optimize instructional time and classroom use. We also want to know how the change in curricular structure affected student learning outcomes. There is substantial research that shows that moving to a hybrid instructional model impacts learning outcomes for different course content in different ways. We also had a departmental goal of improving completion rate in these lower-division critical thinking courses. We developed the following direct assessments: 1. Offer traditional and hybrid Critical Thinking simultaneously. 2. Compare outcomes in both modalities with the same instructor, and compare across modalities with different instructors. 3. Move practice sets and self-assessments on-line. 4. Use class time for mini-lectures and working through challenge problems as identified in on-line assessments. 5. Run course sections at complementary times so that students had the option of repeating lecture and challenge problems each week as needed. 6. Offer out-of-class tutoring assistance for one-

on-one skills building.

4. What were the results of the assessment? Include also a narrative about what the results suggest about the skills students possess when they graduate from your program.

Here are the end-of-term results across multiple sections of Critical Thinking. The results show total achievement as measured in points, and averaged (with a percentage – variation is due to slight points variation between sections):

> Hybrid 170.5 (77.8%)
> Hybrid 170.6 (73.5%)
> Traditional 170.3 (72.8%)
> Hybrid 170.4 (79.2%)
> Hybrid 170.5 (79.5%)
> Traditional 170.1 (70%)
> Hybrid 170.4 (78.1%)
> Hybrid 170.5 (77.1%)

These results show that the achievement outcomes were the lowest for the two traditional courses that did not have the hybrid interventions developed for this assessment. The grade report outcomes show higher completion rates and higher grades in the hybrid classes than in historical comparables.

Philosophy students are well-known to develop extremely strong critical thinking skills by the end of their program of study. This has been established in previous years' assessments, and we continue to conceive of new methods for assessing and improving these outcomes. We are particularly interesting in mapping the skills development for students in our program from pre-CSULB skills (measured in high school/transfer GPA and test scores), performance in PHIL 170 (Critical Thinking), performance in PHIL 270 (Symbolic Logic), and through to the upper-division major curriculum. We have seen a strong correlation between performance at these different levels, but we also need to focus on identifying what particular skills are imparted and improved upon at each stage. We are also mindful of the role our courses play in the General Education curriculum. The Philosophy Department used to be the primary department offering lower-division dedicated critical thinking courses at the university. This has changed dramatically in recent years and Philosophy is offering far fewer courses. It is still our goal to offer the best possible instruction in critical thinking at all levels.

5. How will you use the results used for improving student learning (how are you "closing the loop")?

We have discovered that most students benefit from increased levels of practice, including self-assessment, with immediate feedback in the on-line format. We have also found that students benefit from the option of having two options per week for reviewing challenging new concepts. Critical Thinking is not a content-based skill, but rather a practice and repetition-based skill that strengthens through repeated exposure. We will continue to challenge our instructors to use this feedback to improve completion rates. In particular, we have found that an achievement gap accompanies Critical Thinking courses in ways that are not found in other courses. We will continue to use targeted tutoring interventions to close this loop.

Further assessment will be needed to determine which intervention is the most appropriate for the critical thinking content at each level in our program. For example, students in some courses benefit from developing critical thinking skills through repeated problem sets; in other courses the benefit may come from assessing lecture content in multiple modalities; in other courses students may primarily develop these skills through focused tutorials.

5. How might the strategies and results of this year's assessment inform your department's approach during the next cycle?

The Department plans on assessing Critical Thinking in more courses using assessment tools appropriate to those courses. We began with our lower-division Critical Thinking courses because those courses can be assessed independent of content-specific variables. There is also more uniformity in instructional materials between instructors and course sections, so it is easier to test the effects of interventions. As we expand this cycle of Critical Thinking assessment we will need to develop tools for comparing the outcomes between courses with varying content.

7. Please provide an update on actions regarding your MOU if appropriate and attach the update to this report if necessary.

We have not received an MOU.

Please send the completed report to your College Dean, Interim Vice Provost Jody Cormack, and the Director for Program Review and Assessment Sharlene Sayegh. Please save a copy for your files. If you have any questions, please contact Sharlene at Sharlene.Sayegh@csulb.edu.