Philosophy Assessment: The Feedback Loop

Department of Philosophy
Assessment Showcase – May 2, 2012
Philosophy Assessment Feedback Loop

• **Devise method** for conducting assessments
  – Retreat model: meet twice to plan first, analyze second
  – Collaborative team of three faculty **conducts exercise**

• **Review** assessment reports and responses
  – **Implement changes** in curriculum, pedagogy and testing/student feedback for outcome assessed

• **Refine** assessment method
  – **Incorporate lessons** from previous exercises: design curricular materials with explicit rubrics in mind to create baseline data for future assessments
Overview of Assessment History

- **Outcome 7: Winter/Spring 2008**
  - Assessed critical analysis and independent research

- **Outcome 1: Winter/Spring 2010**
  - Assessed mastery of formal and informal logic and fallacies

- **Outcome 2: Winter/Spring 2012**
  - Assessing critical and close textual reading skills
Overview of Assessment History

• Process Stage One
  – Select outcome to be assessed
  – Design two-stage retreat structure for assessment team

• Process Stage Two
  – Retreat One: develop rubrics to measure performance criteria
    • Collaborative development of rubrics for measuring criteria
    • Identification of work products by which to determine mastery
  – Retreat Two: review work products against rubrics
    • Measure student performance against rubric standards
    • Compile data on outcome mastery as specified by criteria
    • Identify problems and recommend changes and strategies for outcome mastery improvement
Overview of Assessment History

• **Process Stage Three**
  – Create and submit **report** to SLOAA and OHE
  – Review response to report and **identify means of adopting suggestions and implementing recommended changes**

• **Process Stage Four**
  – **Implement** curricular, pedagogical and testing/student assessment changes to improve outcome mastery
  – **Select new outcome** to assess
  – Design assessment exercise that **frontloads** curricular, pedagogical and testing/assessment content with performance criteria in explicit view
• **Outcome:** Engage critically both the primary and secondary literature on philosophical subject matter, to present one’s critical assessment orally to a group, and to produce a written document reflecting one’s independent research on a philosophical subject

• **Method:** examine copies of individual student research papers and measure progress on four rubrics reflecting performance criteria
Outcome 7 – Critical Analysis and Research
Winter/Spring 2008

• Developed three rubrics to measure performance
  – 1. Completeness and accuracy using primary and secondary sources
  – 2. Organize philosophical critique in alignment with primary and secondary sources
  – 3. Originality of critique

• Results: Weird!!
  – More than 1/3 of class fell below expectations on use of sources
  – Yet, all but 1 student out of 14 met or exceeded standard of originality, and 1/3 exceeded standard on organization
  – Message: redefine outcome to privilege analysis and reflection alongside research
Outcome 7 – Critical Analysis and Research
Winter/Spring 2008

• **Recommended Changes**
  – Include more support for integrating secondary material
  – Allow students to choose among analytic, reflection and research paper models; not just research

• **Implementation and Measurement**
  – Following incarnations of capstone course allowed choice of paper model beyond research
  – 5 chose analysis, 4 reflection, 4 research
  – All 13 met or exceeded standards; 3 others did not finish course
  – More explicit research training in selected 300 level “area” courses
Outcome 1 – Logic and Fallacies
Winter/Spring 2010

• **Outcome:** Recognize patterns of valid and fallacious logical reasoning, and basics of logical theory

• **Method:** examine a variety of student work products: quizzes, exams and in class exercises in formal and informal logic; examine mastery of logic application in analysis of classic philosophy text
Outcome 1 – Logic and Fallacies
Winter/Spring 2010

• Developed four rubrics to measure performance
  – 1. mastery of valid deductive forms
  – 2. mastery of methods for assessing inductive argument
  – 3. recognition of formal fallacies in formal and ordinary language contexts
  – 4. recognition of informal fallacies in ordinary language contexts

• Results: fell short on fallacies
  – Only 59% met or exceeded standard on rubric 3
  – Only 74% met or exceeded standard on rubric 4
Outcome 1 - Logic and Fallacies
Winter/Spring 2010

• **Recommended Changes**
  – Provide more in-class exercises on informal fallacies as well as additional online resources for recognition
  – Provide more opportunity to practice recognition of formal fallacies and increase percentage of exam content devoted to them

• **Implementation and Measurement**
  – Provided three times as much class time to fallacy teaching and practice, including analysis of media fallacies
  – Formed SAKAI resource bank of media fallacies for study and held live-time SAKAI chats to provide feedback on analysis
  – Only 10% (3/30) fell below expectations on informal fallacy testing and only 17% (5/30) fell below on formal fallacy testing early in term, and none fell below in application to text by end of term.
Outcome 2 – Critical and Close Reading
Winter/Spring 2012

• **Outcome:** Read a major philosophical text analytically and be able to write out critical evaluations of philosophical arguments

• **Method:** Two stages of change
  
  (1) Recognition that outcome itself was too narrow in scope to capture full range of textual strategies – so created three rubrics that anticipate an alteration in the outcome to stress alternatives to argument analysis

  (2) Select two essay exams for comparative data on improvement, plus late-stage quizzes and class exercises to observe student performance on three varieties of textual interpretation strategies
Outcome 2 – Critical and Close Reading

Winter/Spring 2012

- Developed three rubrics to measure performance
  1. Ability to identify and explain key concepts/arguments
  2. Trace development of concept/idea/theme throughout text
  3. Explicate passage and show how it articulates key concepts

- Pedagogy designed to meet criteria
  1. Weekly quizzes, in-class use of rubrics, online study guides
  2. Quiz practice, peer critique workshops, essay exam questions
  3. Explicit in-class integration of concept/idea/theme development, student-generated content explication, essay exam questions
2012: Changes from Previous Exercises

- **CONSCIOUS IMPLEMENTATION**: Made alterations to curricular, pedagogical and course testing/student assessment tools in anticipation of current and future exercises.

- **EMBEDDED MEASUREMENT**: compiled and analyzed data related to student performance on outcomes in current iteration of course material and work products related to them.

- **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**: Focused content and methods related to outcome in order to inform development of new courses within an overhauled Philosophy curriculum – one designed to meet existing outcomes more explicitly and in depth.
Assessment Feedback Loop: The New Philosophy Curriculum

- **Outcome 7: Critical Analysis and Research**
  - Expand range of 400-level courses that can provide opportunities for extended student scholarship
  - Allow traditional philosophical models of analysis and reflection to be chosen alongside scholarly research
  - Provide more support and training for use and integration of secondary source material in research contexts
• **Outcome 1: Logic and Fallacies**
  
  – Decouple logic and fallacy training from existing major gateway course (PHL 205)
  
  – Develop new logic and critical reasoning course (PHL 201) at the 200 level, with richer formal logic and fallacy components than existing course (PHL 101)
  
  – Explore online tools for logic practice and explore collaboration with other departments whose curriculum features structured and quantitative reasoning
• **Outcome 2: Critical and Close Reading**
  – Split historical and critical/close reading aspects of existing major gateway course (PHL 205) into two new courses, PHL 202 and PHL 203.
  
  – Develop PHL 203 (What is Philosophy?) around focus on critical and close reading, using Assessment rubrics as guides to content and pedagogical emphases.
  
  – Use information gathered from Spring 2012 assessment exercise as baseline data for measuring improvement on outcome mastery along all three rubrics in future assessment exercises.
THANK YOU!!