UW Colleges Assessment Planning and Reporting Form
2005-2006

Email your reports to **SAC@uwc.edu**

Department	Philosophy
Assessment Coordinator(s)	Roger Rigterink

PART 1: Assessment of General Education Outcomes

Section 1: Identify the Proficiencies and Performance Indicators Assessed

	Proficiency	Performance Indicators	Courses Fall Semester	Courses Spring Semester
	A. Analytical Skills	2. Analyze and evaluate arguments.	PHI-101	PHI101; PHI202; PHI210; PHI211; PHI226; PHI 241; PHI243; PHI248 (See note below.)

Note: In the Spring the department is attempting to assess more seasoned students than in the Fall when it assesses students in its most heavily registered course (PH101). Because of the diversity of advanced courses the departmental members teach, if we were to choose just one course, few departmental members (and few students) would be participating in the Spring assessment. For that reason, the department has instructed members to do an assessment in what they consider to be their most advanced course for the Spring semester. (For one IAS member, that happened to be PHI101. That was the only course he taught.)

Section 2: Explain how, in general, the institutional rubric was applied to assessment activities.

Please attach examples of assessment activities (i.e. modified rubric, assignment, questions) and measurements used to place individuals into the three categories (exceeds, meets, fails to meet).

The department constructed a short test to determine students' ability to analyze and evaluate arguments. Trials showed the longer tests produced essentially the same results. One deficiency in the test is that while is does as advertised "determine students' ability to analyze and evaluate arguments," it is not as tightly tied to the specifics of the institutional rubrics as it might be. The department is taking steps to address this issue. (See Section 3, #2 below.)

Proficiency	Exceeds	Meets	Fails to meet
Analytic Skills A2	271 (25%)	596 (55%)	216 (20%)

Note: Results include a report turned in (with apologies) mid-summer – too late to be included within data set compiled by Greg Nettesheim.

Section 3: Use of Results

1. **Use by instructors** - Summarize the ways individual instructors plan to use assessment results to improve the instructional process.

This is a tough one. One of the problems is that, in using the institutional rubrics, it is hard to determine to what degree success (or failure) is due to anything in an individual course. Teachers might credit the success of his or her students to exercises or assignments in his or his class, when, in fact, success (or failure) was due to the collective impact of the Colleges' education.

During the spring semester, a number of philosophy faculty experimented with additional assessment questions (see #2 immediately below) wanting to see how much a student's success was tied to questions that are framed to material used in the course. Those instructors that did so, found the results of assessment useful in gauging the impact of some of their individual assignments and are making adjustments.

(I am not being critical of using institutional rubrics. We need to discover the overall success of the Colleges program. But, the more generalized the skills, the more difficult it is to determine what is causing what.)

2. **Use by department** - What changes will you and/or the department assessment committee recommend to your department. Include changes to:
    a. assessment process
    b. proficiencies selected
    c. performance indicators used to measure proficiency
    d. assessment activities
    e. evaluative rubrics
    f. student performance in a specific course (if there is something that stands out with department discussion.

(See attached report on the Spring departmental assessment meeting for more detail on what is reported below.)

Summarizing, at the Spring departmental assessment meeting, the coordinator noted that the global results (in terms of fails to meet, meets, exceeds expectations) for the departmental Fall assessment fell in line which what other departments was experiencing that were assessing the same proficiencies. At the same time, the coordinator noted a surprising lack of correlation (within the departmental results) between how many semesters students had attended the Colleges and their performance. In a similar fashion, there was a low correlation between assessment results vs. high school rank and grade in course. (Some lack of correlation is to be expected. There are, for example, always the very talented students who, for whatever reason, end up doing poorly in a course because of lack of effort.)

Unfortunately, there are multiple explanations that could account for this lack of correlation. Rather than just choosing one explanation and testing to see if that was the

correct one (this could be problematic if the department chose the wrong one), the department decided that during its Spring assessment to use the same tool, but have individual members add more questions of their own choosing to see if the added questions would produce better correlations. Departmental members are to report the results of their experiments at the fall departmental meeting.

A second change is that the department will attempt to make its test more closely tied to the College's rubric. Currently, the test measures the ability of analyze and evaluate arguments, but the test includes some emphasis on a students' ability to recognize the difference between reasons vs. causes – something of value, but not part of the Colleges' rubric. (Given other needs, one question that still needs to be addressed is whether the department should ask the Colleges to include this as part of the rubric. What we are experiencing here is that the departments' experiences with student failings in analyzing arguments are not necessarily the same as what is seen Colleges' wide.)

3. **Course of action** - After discussion of the results by the department, what course of action will **the department** take to improve student performance with respect to the assessed proficiency?

Most of the departmental discussion focused on improving our assessment instruments. (See section above and summary of departmental discussion attached to this report.)

Given concerns about the instrument itself, departmental discussions have not yet focused on whether the department considers the results satisfactory and what might be done to improve upon them (regardless of whether they are satisfactory or not). The department is committed to having such discussions during its Spring 2007 meeting.

Note: In trying to refine its instrument, departmental members were encouraged to add some trial questions when they administered the departmental assessment tool during the Spring semester. As a result of this, several departmental members expressed surprise at some of the results (e.g., students having shown good analytic skills on course papers, but failing to display them on the assessment questionnaire even when a question was added that was closely tied to their own course material). This has led to some individual dissatisfaction with student performance and reflection on what might be changed within an individual course.

PART 2: Assessment of Department-Specific Outcomes

Section 1: Identify department-specific learning objectives.

Outcomes/Performance Indicators	Courses Fall Semester	Courses Spring Semester
1.In taking logic, any student should be able to successfully symbolize English sentences into		PH I 211

an abstract language.		
2. In taking logic, any student should be able to construct a deductive proof on their own.		PHI 211

(Note: Both of these skills are tied to improving a students' ability to do abstract thinking, one of the main skills that the department hopes to develop throughout all of its classes.)

Section 2: Insert the rubrics used here and explain how the rubric or standards were used to assess each outcome or performance indicator. Please attach examples of assessment activities (i.e. modified rubric, assignment, questions) and measurements used to place individuals into the three categories (exceeds, meets, fails to meet). **When completing this section, it may be best to explain the results by course (or course clusters if there were similar tools or results) rather than by instructor.**

The rubrics used are attached. Since not every instructor uses the same abstract language in logic, nor the same proof structure, the rubric indicates the difficulty level that students need to master in order to be rated at the different levels. Teachers are to determine which students meet which levels based upon their own exams that either use the stated problems or problems of a similar level.

Departmental Outcome/Performance Indicator	# Exceed	# Meet	# Do Not Meet
1. Translation	21	37	10
2. Proof making	13	39	15

Section 3: Use of results.

1. **Use by instructors** - Summarize the ways individual instructors plan to use assessment results to improve the instructional process.

Instructors are always evaluating and looking for different ways to improve upon the teaching of the above named skills. The rubrics give the instructors a common baseline by which to measure the success of students in their own courses against departmental expectations.

2. **Use by department** - What changes will you and/or the department assessment committee recommend to your department. Include changes to:
   a. assessment process
   b. proficiencies selected
   c. performance indicators used to measure proficiency
   d. assessment activities
   e. evaluative rubrics

f. student performance in a specific course (if there is something that stands out with department discussion.

The department is very satisfied with the rubric itself. The big problem is that departmental specific assessment has been done the second semester. A fair number of instructors only teach logic in the fall. Next year the course will be assesses fall semester with a departmental discussion of the results.

The department needs to discuss whether it considers the results to be satisfactory and what might be done to improve upon the results (regardless of whether they are satisfactory or not). (See "Course of action" below.)

3. **Course of action** - After discussion of the results by the department, what course of action will the department take to improve student performance with respect to the assessed proficiency?

In the past, the department has devoted a special meeting specifically to the teaching of logic; however it needs to do this again in light of current assessment results. Come the 2006-07 academic year, departmental members will assess PHI 211 (Logic) during the Fall semester (so that more departmental members report results within this class). In addition, part of the Spring 2007 meeting will be devoted to discussing whether the assessment results are satisfactory and what might be done to improve upon them (regardless of whether they are satisfactory or not).

PART 3: Additional Assessment and Contributions

Section 1: Please discuss activities that were supported by the assessment budget for the department assessment committee. In particular outline the department assessment committee activities for the academic year.

The departmental assessment committee is four individuals. (This might seem small, but remember that this is about one third of the department's tenured and tenured track faculty.) Given the size, the committee chose to do most of its work via email. Next year, a face to face meeting is likely.

Section 2: Please discuss activities that were supported by the assessment budget for overall department assessment activities. In particular outline the department assessment activities for the academic year.

About two hours of the Fall meeting was devoted to assessment. The chair scheduled a Sunday morning session after the Spring meeting for the department to discuss assessment activities. This meeting lasted about three hours and the extra overnight was supported by the Assessment budget. (As of the writing of this report, I could not obtain a dollar figure on how much this portion of the Spring meeting cost.)

Section 3: Please ask for and include in the report information from department members about any other assessment activities they have conducted, particularly

in conjunction with grant-funded innovations. Also ask for and describe briefly any additional contributions to assessment such as publications, presentations, qualitative classroom innovations (**such as** Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities), and other items relating to assessment that the department wishes to note.

Departmental members are encouraged on a regular, ongoing basis, to design and implement assessment tools that meet their own specific needs. Some examples:

- One departmental member had a class meet via the Internet on five occasions during the semester. He used an assessment tool to find out whether the students found this alternative to normal class time useful and what recommendations they might make as to how Internet Discussion Day ought be run.
- Another departmental member required members of his class to go on a campus art field trip. (The instructor includes a section of aesthetics within his Introduction to Philosophy class.) Since the field trip was not philosophically oriented, the instructor wanted to know whether student found the field trip useful when they did cover matters specific to philosophy of art in the classroom.
- Another departmental member conducted a survey on his D2L site asking students which exercises they found most helpful, how much of the reading did they do, what advice they would give to future students entering the class, etc. (There were twenty two questions total.) The instructor uses this information in designing his course for the following semester.
- Another instructor gave his ethics students an "ethics test" (a questionnaire as to what they would do within a practical ethical situation). He then gave his students the same test at the end of the semester in order to see what impact his course has on actual behavior (or, at least, on how students claim they would behave). Again, he uses this information in redesigning his class for the next offering.

Reporting by departmental members on such activities is sporadic (or, perhaps, not enough members currently carry out such activities). Within departmental meetings, the recommendation that such activities be considered part and parcel of good teaching is well received. Hopefully, the use of such individual assessment activities will become as much a matter of course as the use of a syllabus within class. That is the ultimate goal.

PART 4: Historical Trends

Section 1: History of General Education activities. Please add more rows as necessary. This should be an on-going list copied from each previous report.

Proficiency	Year Assessed	Results	Year Assessed	Results	Year Assessed	Results
A1	**2003 - 04**	**E = 46** **M = 111** **F = 33**		**E =** **M =** **F =**		**E =** **M =** **F =**
A2	**2003 - 04**	**E = 28**		**E =**		**E =**

		M = 53 **F = 55**		**M =** **F =**		**M =** **F =**
Communication skills	**2004-05 Fall**	**E = 360** **M = 211** **F = 30**	**2004-05 Spring**	**E = 125** **M = 71** **F = 15**		**E =** **M =** **F =**

Section 2: History of department learning objective activities. Please add more rows as necessary. This should be an on-going list copied from each previous report.

Objective	Year Assessed	Results	Year Assessed	Results	Year Assessed	Results
The two logic skills were grouped as one result in 2003-04	**2003 – 04**	**E = 37** **M = 72** **F = 21**		**E =** **M =** **F =**		**E =** **M =** **F =**
The two logic skills were grouped as one result in 2004-05	**2004 – 05**	**E = 20** **M = 29** **F = 20**		**E =** **M =** **F =**		**E =** **M =** **F =**

Departmental Assessment

Summary of Spring Meeting

Individual assessment: One of the comments I hear all the time (not just within the department) is that we (faculty members) do assessment all of the time. Why do we need a special assessment program?

I suspect that there is a lot of truth to the above statement – that we (departmental members) do a lot of assessment on an individual basis. If we don't, we should. (Obviously that is an editorial comment on my part.) I was struck, however, by a comment by someone at a recent assessment meeting. The speaker had experience in hospital management. As you might imagine, hospitals are regularly reviewed and re-reviewed constantly in order to maintain accreditation. What the speaker noted, based upon her experience with accreditation teams, was that such teams do not and probably cannot just take your word for it. ("Oh, we recalibrate this machine on a regular basis.") The bottom line is that if you don't document it, then (from the perspective of an accreditation team) you haven't done it.

In part, this is where we stand with regard to our claims that we do assessment all of the time. If we don't document it, we haven't done it.

In this context, I am encouraging departmental members to do individual assessment exercises – whatever it is that meets their personal needs – whatever will help them become more effective teachers given what they individually do in the classroom. But, document it. What sorts of things do I have in mind? A few examples:

- For several years, I have been running regular "Internet Discussion Day" sessions in biomedical ethics. In essence, class meets via the discussion board on D2L (nee Blackboard) as opposed to meeting face-to-face. I have reasons for wanting to do this, but have been uncertain as to whether students see the same value in the exercise as I do. Last year, after about the third such session, I issued a questionnaire on student reactions to Internet Discussion Day. I learned that two students considered the exercise a complete waste of time, that most students considered it a highly valuable exercise, that a reasonably sized pocket of students were

confused about how the exercise was graded, and, that a fair number of students would like me to take a more active role in the discussions. (I had tried to keep a low profile in that I did not want to dominate the discussion.) This year, I issued a follow-up questionnaire to see if increased participation (I took up the suggestion) was actually seen as a positive when put into practice.

- Professor adjusted his Introduction to Philosophy syllabus to include two weeks on aesthetics. He then had his students go on the student art trip at the Washington County campus. Given that the art trip was just that, an "art" trip, he wondered if the students found this experience valuable and whether they thought that there was a sufficient tie to the material on aesthetics to make the demand worthwhile. He sees this as a good opportunity for assessment.
- I liked one professor telling us last year that he asks his students to write him a personal letter about his course at the end of the semester. He uses this to make adjustments in his teaching style and course material the next go around.
- Professor suggested that students be queried at the end of a particular class period as to what they saw as the main point of that particular class period. To ensure that he doesn't just hear the ideas of the first person to speak, have everyone write their own beliefs about what was the main point of a class period on a piece of paper (a three by five note card) to hand in. (We often find out what students learned and did not learn over a period of time on our exams. How often do we find out what they learned in a given class period? Steve could use the information to correct misimpressions prior to the next exam. In addition, he could learn more about what students hear and don't hear and use this to make changes in future presentations.)

I could go on and on with other alternatives. This is a creative department. The bottom line is that I am asking everyone report on something that they have done (or, do something now that this request has been made a formal one) and report the fact that they have done some form of assessment (very much tailored to your own needs) to me. Please note: I do ***not*** want to know the details of anything you learned from an assessment activity. If I were to ask you to report that, I am afraid that you would only seek out positive news. Instead, I want to know (a.) what you did (used a questionnaire, had students fill out a three by five card, talked to six students as a focus group, had another teacher come in an interview the class, whatever); (b.) with an eye toward learning about what; and, (c.) how it affected your teaching (you decided a particular exercise was a success, you modified a learning experience, etc.) Please remember, that if we don't document that we do assessment, then the accreditation agency has no choice but to presume that we don't do it. Saying that we do assessment all the time won't cut the mustard.

Departmental specific assessment: We will again be assessing logic using the rubric that was developed last year. This will affect only those teaching logic this spring. One thing is apparent, however: we teach more sections of logic in the fall than the spring. That puts us out of sync with the Colleges' assessment program that focuses on Colleges-wide assessments in the fall. I will see about doing departmental assessments of logic in the fall in the future.

Discussion of the departmental assessment from last fall: Last fall, the department used a new assessment tool to check on student's ability to "Analyze and evaluate arguments." The level of participation within the department appears to have been good. In addition, the departmental numbers as to what percentage of students fail to meet, meet, and exceed expectations are pretty much in line with Colleges' norms. On the other hand, I have two concerns about our assessment tool.

The case of the missing correlations: Using data provided by Greg Nettesheim, I was able to determine to what extent such things as students' grades in class, whether they ranked in the upper or lower half of their high school class, the number of credits that they had completed at the Colleges correlated with their performance on the assessment test. In all cases, the correlations were weak. *None of these things* were good predictors of how well the students did on our assessment test.

Most of the discussion during our assessment meeting centered on possible explanations for this lack of a strong correlation: The test was too brief, the test was not sufficiently tied to course material, when students did find course material within questions what they had been taught distracted them from the point of the stated questions, the vocabulary of the test questions was not stressed in class, what we are

testing for is not critical to academic success, etc. etc. At present, we have no way of knowing which of these hypotheses is true.

Colleges-wide standards: While the department is testing students' ability to "Analyze and evaluate arguments" the way that we go about it is only loosely tied to the *set of* rubrics developed by the Senate Assessment Committee. (The rubric for "Analyze and evaluate arguments" is printed below.)

Exceeds Expectations	• Analyzes and evaluates alternative points of view • Draws conclusions and examines implications • Can provide evidence and/or explain fallacies and inconsistencies • Refutes bias, if present
Meets Expectations	• Identifies or offers alternative points of view, where possible • Draws conclusions • Accurately recognizes/identifies fallacies and inconsistencies • Detects bias, if present
Fails to Meet Expectations	• Does not recognize alternative points of view. • Fails to draw conclusions • Fails to recognize/identify fallacies and inconsistencies • Fails to note bias, if present

We need to strengthen the tie between our test and at least one of the sequential ladders found in this rubric.

Recommendations for this spring (and beyond): We are already committed to using the same testing tool within what each instructor considers his or her most advance class this semester. However, we need to make alterations in our instrument for future use. Rather than coming up with a new tool to be used by every departmental member – one that might not gain the information that we need or be seriously flawed – my suggestion is that every departmental member *individually* experiment in order to gain information that will give us better information as to how to proceed in the future. Among the suggestions that came from the meeting:

- Adding more questions of the same type to our test so that not so much of a student's rating hangs on an answer to an individual question.
- Adding more questions, but have those questions tied much more closely to course material.
- Adding questions that might more closely tie our test to one of the sets of rubrics found above. (In this regard, there was a good counter suggestion -- that such additional questions might become our actual test as to whether students are meeting the Colleges-wide proficiencies. In the meantime, our existing test, or some variation of it, might become a test for a departmental specific proficiency in the future.)
- Take a few minutes after administering the test to quiz a class as to how important they see what we are testing for to college success (or, success in philosophy courses).
- Take a few minutes after administering the test to go over the test questions with a class with an eye toward discovering why they got answers wrong. What were they thinking? What confused them?

The bottom line is that we are all to administer our current test *as is* to our most advanced class this spring. *On top of that*, we are each to do *something* additional (exactly what is left to the discretion of the individual departmental member) with an eye toward gaining information that will improve our assessment techniques in the future.

The results of our current test are to be reported to Academic Affairs in the same way that we reported our results from last fall. (They put the appropriate class list in the public folders; you copy the class list to your computer; fill in which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations; email the results to

Greg. When you email these results, they should only reflect the results of how the students performed on the test that we used last fall.)

The results of whatever you do in addition should be reported directly *to me*. (You might, for example, have added more questions – how did the students do? Did these questions seem effective given what you were trying to test? If you queried your students after administering the test, what did you learn? Etc.) These reports will be used next fall when we try to determine how best to proceed in the future.

Additional agreements: Departmental members were interested in sharing additional questions that people are considering adding. We can do this via email.

I will check with Greg as to whether he can offer individual departmental members the sort of breakdowns (results according to grade, high school class rank, etc.) for their additional test material that he offers to the department as a whole.

Finally, I will check as to whether one departmental member can change his designation as to which course is assessed this spring. (I mention this in case any other departmental members are having second thoughts on which class to assess.)

We have a creative department and it was good meeting.
Thank you.

UW-Colleges Philosophy Department Assessment for Fall, 2005

Test for A2 (Analyze and evaluate arguments).

For each problem, fill in the letter that answers the question when that is asked for, otherwise circle the answer(s).Alan Turing makes the following argument: "(A) Thinking is a function of man's immortal soul. (B) God has given an immortal soul to every man and woman, (C) but not to any other animal or to machines. (D) Hence, no animal or machine can think."

1. What is the conclusion of Turing's argument? _____(fill in the letter)

2. Turing's argument above argument depends on an unstated principle. What is that principle? (circle the answer)

    a. Thinking implies intelligence.
    b. Only God's creations can think.
    c. Only those things with immortal souls can think.
    d. Only organic beings can think.

3. Which of the following is an argument? (circle the answer)

    a. "All ideas, especially abstract ones, are naturally faint and obscure. The mind has but a slender hold of them....On the contrary, all impressions, that is, all sensations either outward or inward, are strong and vivid." David Hume.
    b. "A piece of manna of a sensible bulk is able to produce in us the idea of a round or square figure; and by being removed from one place to another, the idea of motion." John Locke
    c. "If a theory has utterly no observational consequences, it would be extraordinarily difficult to unmask that theory as false. So, to be a genuine scientific theory, a group of statements must have observational consequences." Philip Kitcher

4. Consider the claim: "(i) There has been progress because (ii) people once held that the sun went around the earth and they no longer hold that." (circle the answer).

    a. There is an argument here, the conclusion is (i) and the reason given is (ii).
    b. There is an argument here, the conclusion is (ii) and the reason given is (i).
    c. There is no argument here.

5. Consider the claim: "(i) There has been progress because (ii) people once held that the sun went around the earth and they no longer hold that." (Circle the answer).

    a. There is an argument here, the conclusion is (i) and the reason given is (ii).
    b. There is an argument here, the conclusion is (ii) and the reason given is (i).
    c. There is no argument here

Logic Skills Assessment Rubrics

Part I: Translation of statements:

1st level: Does not meet expectations. (Perhaps can pass the course based upon other skills, but fails to meet departmental expectations with regard to core skills with regard to sentential logic.):

On this level are students who are able to translate

- all the connectives correctly (including negation as a connective)
- "if" and "only if" sentences with the antecedent and consequent in any order (in English), i.e., "A if B" and "If A then B"
- a really elementary grouping problem, e.g. "If A and B then C"

2nd level: Meets expectations

At this level students are able to translate

- negative compounds (neither nor statements, and, differentiate between "A and B are not both true" and "A and B are both not true")
- negative conditionals "it is false that if A then B"
- unless statements

3rd level: Exceeds expectations

Students at this level

- can translate highly complex statements involving grouping
- have the ability to take very different wording within an argument and recognize the need for common letters (for example "The officer would have recorded the event if he had seen it, but there is no such entry.")
- have the ability to take sentences that use one of the flag words (and, or, etc.) and realize that it is not translated the standard way ("Either road leads to Rome" which means they both do, or, "Get an A on the final and you'll get an A for the course" which requires a horseshoe or arrow.)

Part II. Proofs

1st level: Does not meet expectations (okay, but not anything to brag about):
On this level are students who are able to.

- fill in the justification column of a completed proof
- complete a really simple proof (two or three lines needed with easy rules).

2nd level: Meets expectations
At this level students are able to

- complete proofs of about five or six lines,
- complete an easy conditional proof

3rd level: Exceeds expectations

Students at this level can complete proofs that are tricky (in terms of the calculus used) such as

- "If (If A then A or B)] then (A and C). Therefore, C." (To solve this, you use a conditional proof to show that the antecedent is true.)
- some rule such as modus ponens or the addition rule without using those rules
- "A or B. If A then C. If B then C. Therefore C"
- "Not-A. Therefore if A then B (for arbitrary 'B')
- "If A, then B and not-B. Therefore not-A."