

Philosophy BA

Mission Statement

Mission Statement (Full Description):

The primary mission of the Department of Philosophy is to support the overall mission of Southern Methodist University: to be a private university of the highest quality dedicated to excellence in teaching, research and community service. The goal of the Department of Philosophy is to provide a rigorous curricula for philosophy majors and minors (curricula that include the study of major figures in the history of philosophy), a rigorous curriculum for ethics minors, and a variety of courses that will enhance the study of other disciplines. Students should reach a high level of writing skill demonstrating both an in depth knowledge of philosophy and critical thinking skills.

Location: SMU main campus.

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?:

No

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?:

No

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?:

Prior to AY2023-2024

Progress:

In Progress

Reasoning skills.

SLO Step 1A: SLO Number:

1

SLO Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Commented [SS1]: Overall, the Philosophy BA assessment report is **exemplary across nearly all rubric dimensions**. The department shows a high level of engagement, uses strong and appropriate measures, documents thoughtful faculty dialogue, and provides detailed action plans that demonstrate ongoing improvement. The report reflects a department that takes teaching, learning, and assessment seriously.

There are only a **few small opportunities for improvement**, mostly related to tightening language, refining documentation, or adding minor clarifications. What follows is the full summary of strengths and growth areas, consistent with the analysis provided previously.

Mission Statement

The mission statement includes several strengths: it aligns with SMU's mission, emphasizes rigor, and identifies core curricular elements. However, it reads somewhat like a list of offerings plus institutional language. A stronger, more focused mission statement would clarify:

- the distinctive purpose of the Philosophy BA,
- the student experience the program aims to create, and
- how the program embodies the values of philosophical study.

This is a small opportunity rather than a major issue—just a chance to sharpen the statement so it feels more purpose-driven and less catalog-like.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The SLOs—especially in logic, writing, philosophical positions, and history—are well aligned with disciplinary standards and clearly reflect what the department values. They are measurable, appropriate for a BA program, and supported by robust assessment methods.

Small opportunity: Some SLOs (especially SLO 1) are quite long and include multiple goals in a single statement. Condensing each outcome into one clear, measurable action verb would make them easier to assess and more consistent with the rubric.

But overall, the SLOs are strong and thoughtfully constructed.

Measures and Targets

The Philosophy BA uses excellent measures: logic exams assessed with rubrics, senior papers evaluated with clear criteria, upper-division course assessments on a five-year rotation, and senior self-assessments that complement the direct evidence.

Only a few light-touch suggestions:

- Several measure descriptions could explicitly state the rubrics being used (even if they are attached).
- Targets would be stronger with a brief rationale—for example, noting whether the threshold reflects past performance, faculty consensus, or national expectations.

These are refinements, not weaknesses. The measures themselves are appropriate and the data analysis is exemplary.

Program Goals (PGs)

... [1]

Students will engage in the development of sophisticated critical reasoning skills that empower them to think analytically and independently. They will learn to systematically assess the strength of arguments, distinguish between valid and invalid reasoning, identify biases and logical fallacies, and construct well-supported conclusions. Students will cultivate advanced critical reasoning skills, enabling them to analyze arguments, identify underlying assumptions, and evaluate evidence effectively. Furthermore, students will gain an in-depth understanding of both formal and informal logic, including symbolic logic, and the foundational rules that govern logical inference. They will develop a comprehensive understanding of logical principles, including the structure of valid arguments, common logical fallacies, and formal systems of logic. This combination of skills and knowledge will prepare them to apply logical analysis across a wide range of academic disciplines and real-world contexts.

SLO Step 2A: Measure:

Assessment Plan

The assessment of student learning in philosophy will consist of the following three components:

1. **Formal Logic Exam Survey (Fall Semester)**
A faculty assessment of formal logic exams will be conducted in one section of **PHIL 1301 (Logic)**. This assessment will evaluate student competence in **four core skills in formal logic**, using a standardized **five-point rubric**:
 - Translation into **sentential logic**
 - Translation into **predicate logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in sentential logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in predicate logic**
2. **Senior Paper Assessment (Spring Semester)**
A sample of **papers written by graduating senior philosophy majors** will be assessed to evaluate students' ability to **reason and argue cogently**. Each paper will be evaluated using a five-point scale according to the following criteria:
 - Presence of a **clearly identifiable thesis**
 - Presentation of **clear and coherent arguments**
 - **Avoidance of informal fallacies**
 - Demonstrated **awareness of relevant objections or weaknesses** in claims, theories, or arguments
3. **Graduating Senior Self-Assessment**
At graduation, all **philosophy majors** will complete a **self-assessment survey** reflecting on their ability to engage in **philosophical reasoning** at a high level, including both **formal and informal reasoning**. The self-assessment will provide insight into students' perceived competencies and support program-level evaluation and improvement

SLO Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Exit interview, Objective Quiz or Exam, Written paper/project

SLO Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct, Indirect

SLO Step 3A: Target for Measure:

1. Formal Logic Exam Survey (Fall Semester)

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- - Translation into **sentential logic**
 - Translation into **predicate logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in sentential logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in predicate logic**

Performance Target:

We aim for an average score of **at least 3.2 out of 5** in each of the four assessed areas.

2. Senior Paper Assessment (Spring Semester)

A sample of **papers written by graduating senior philosophy majors** will be assessed to evaluate students' ability to **reason and argue cogently**. Each paper will be evaluated using a five-point scale according to the following criteria:

- - Presence of a **clearly identifiable thesis**
 - Presentation of **clear and coherent arguments**
 - **Avoidance of informal fallacies**
 - Demonstrated **awareness of relevant objections or weaknesses** in claims, theories, or arguments

Each paper will be rated on a **5-point scale** (1 = poor; 5 = excellent) for each category.

Performance Target:

We aim for an **average score of at least 4.0** in each of the four assessment categories.

3. Graduating Senior Self-Assessment

At graduation, all **philosophy majors** will complete a **self-assessment survey** reflecting on their ability to engage in **philosophical reasoning** at a high level, including both **formal** and **informal reasoning**. The self-assessment will provide insight into students' perceived competencies and support program-level evaluation and improvement.

Performance Target:

We aim for an average score of 5 (on a 7 point scale) for EITHER their self-assessed ability to reason well OR their self-assessed growth as good reasoners.

SLO Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

SLO Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

1. Formal Logic Exam Survey (Fall Semester)

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- - Translation into **sentential logic**
 - Translation into **predicate logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in sentential logic**
 - Construction of **proofs in predicate logic**

Performance Target:

We aim for an average score of **at least 3.2 out of 5** in each of the four assessed areas.

Logic Exam Assessment Results (2024–2025)

Assessment Area	2024 Avg. Score	2025 Avg. Score
Sentential Logic Translations	4.48	4.21
Predicate Logic Translations	4.00	3.93
Sentential Logic Proofs	4.38	3.66
Predicate Logic Proofs	4.07	3.31

Scale: 1–5

2. Senior Paper Assessment (Spring Semester)

A sample of **papers written by graduating senior philosophy majors** will be assessed to

evaluate students' ability to **reason and argue cogently**. Each paper will be evaluated using a five-point scale according to the following criteria:

- - Presence of a **clearly identifiable thesis**
 - Presentation of **clear and coherent arguments**
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 - Demonstrated **awareness of relevant objections or weaknesses** in claims, theories, or arguments

Each paper will be rated on a **5-point scale** (1 = poor; 5 = excellent) for each category.

Performance Target:

We aim for an **average score of at least 4.0** in each of the four assessment categories

Results Summary

Assessment Criterion	Average Score (out of 5)
1. Clearly identifiable thesis	5.00
2. Presentation of clear arguments	4.45
3. Avoidance of informal fallacies	4.48
4. Awareness of objections or weaknesses in arguments	3.75

3. Graduating Senior Self-Assessment

At graduation, all **philosophy majors** will complete a **self-assessment survey** reflecting on their ability to engage in **philosophical reasoning** at a high level, including both **formal** and **informal reasoning**. The self-assessment will provide insight into students' perceived competencies and support program-level evaluation and improvement.

Assessment Goal:

Graduating senior philosophy majors were to complete a logic self-assessment survey evaluating:

1. Their **ability to reason well** (formal and informal reasoning)
2. Their **growth in reasoning ability** over the course of their undergraduate studies

Performance Target:

An average score of **at least 5.0 (on a 7-point scale)** on either:

- Their self-assessed ability to reason well, **or**
- Their self-assessed growth as good reasoners

Q3: Independent Reasoning (Retrospective Growth)

- **Average Score:** 5.38
- **Most Common Responses:** *Quite a bit* and *A great deal* (38% each)
- **Takeaway:** Students generally believe that SMU philosophy courses significantly **improved** their independent reasoning skills.

Q4: Reasoning Skills Upon Graduation (Current Ability)

- **Average Score:** 2.88
 - **Distribution:** Wide and flat, with nearly equal representation across low and high ends
 - **Takeaway:** This unexpectedly low average contrasts with Q3, indicating **possible confusion** about the question's intent (e.g., comparing themselves to experts rather than reflecting actual skill level).
-

Attached Files

[Faculty Logic Assessment Fall 2024.xlsx](#)

SLO Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

1. Logic Exam Assessment Summary (2024–2025)

Overview:

While the program met its overall goals for student performance in logic, the 2024–2025 results show **slight declines** in some areas compared to the previous year, particularly in the proof-based components.

Performance Trends:

- **Sentential Logic Translations:** Slight decline (2024: 4.48 → 2025: 4.21)
 - **Predicate Logic Translations:** Slight decline (2024: 4.00 → 2025: 3.93)
 - **Sentential Logic Proofs:** Moderate decline (2024: 4.38 → 2025: 3.66)
 - **Predicate Logic Proofs:** Moderate decline (2024: 4.07 → 2025: 3.31)
-

Interpretation:

- **Strengths:** Students continue to perform well in **translating arguments** into formal logical notation in both sentential and predicate logic.
 - **Weaknesses:** Students showed **greater difficulty with constructing formal proofs**, especially in predicate logic.
-

Conclusion:

Despite these modest declines, performance across all categories remains **above the benchmark target of 3.2**. The overall pattern is **consistent with previous years**, with translation skills remaining stronger than proof skills.

2. Assessment of Senior Papers – Critical Thinking (Spring)

All graduating senior philosophy majors who submitted papers in the spring were assessed for critical thinking using a five-point scale across four criteria:

1. **Clearly Identifiable Thesis** – *Average Score: 5.00*
2. **Clear Presentation of Arguments** – *Average Score: 4.45*
3. **Avoidance of Informal Fallacies** – *Average Score: 4.48*
4. **Awareness of Weaknesses or Objections** – *Average Score: 3.75*

These results suggest strong performance in articulating theses and constructing arguments, with slightly lower performance in critically engaging with opposing views or weaknesses in reasoning.

3. Graduating Senior Self-Assessment

Q3: Independent Reasoning (Retrospective Growth)

- **Average Score:** 5.38
- **Most Common Responses:** *Quite a bit* and *A great deal* (38% each)
- **Takeaway:** Students generally believe that SMU philosophy courses significantly **improved** their independent reasoning skills.

Q4: Reasoning Skills Upon Graduation (Current Ability)

- **Average Score:** 2.88
- **Distribution:** Wide and flat, with nearly equal representation across low and high ends
- **Takeaway:** This unexpectedly low average contrasts with Q3, indicating **possible confusion** about the question's intent (e.g., comparing themselves to experts rather than reflecting actual skill level).

Possible Interpretation of the Discrepancy

- **Misunderstanding of Q4 wording:** Students may have interpreted “my ability to reason is...” as a **relative** or **absolute** judgment (e.g., compared to professional philosophers), rather than as a self-assessment in context of undergraduate education.
- **Question framing effect:** Q3 focuses on *growth* (“improved”), which is more encouraging and accessible for students to answer positively. Q4 requires a potentially harsh self-evaluation.

Attached Files

[SMU Philosophy Feedback Summary.pdf](#)

SLO Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Action Plan

Based on Assessment Results from 2024–2025 Academic Year

Purpose

This action plan outlines the Philosophy Department’s response to assessment findings related to formal logic proficiency, critical thinking in philosophical writing, and student self-perception of learning. The goal is to use these findings to improve student learning outcomes, curriculum alignment, and academic support.

I. Formal Logic Skills (PHIL 1301)

Assessment Finding:

Some students demonstrate difficulty with predicate logic translations and formal proofs.

Actions:

1. Faculty Development in Logic Instruction

- Share effective teaching strategies for improving instruction in predicate logic.
- Continue to improve PowerPoints based on assessment results.
- Introduce students to alternate symbol systems when beneficial for comprehension.

2. Supplemental Logic Support

- Promote the formation of study groups, especially for PHIL 1301 students.
- Encourage PHIL 1301 students to utilize tutoring services for additional support.

II. Senior Paper Critical Thinking Assessment

Assessment Finding:

While students generally articulate clear theses, they often underperform in anticipating objections and developing counterarguments.

Actions:

1. Strengthen Dialectical Reasoning Skills

- Emphasize the importance of responding to objections and refining arguments in 3000- and 4000-level courses.
- Encourage consistent attention to dialectical skills throughout upper-level coursework.

2. Senior Seminar Pilot (Spring 2026)

- Experiment with the introduction of senior seminar course to support the development of philosophical writing and reasoning skills.
 - Encourage the inclusion of at least one substantial counterargument and response in the final paper.
 - Focus course activities on the identification, articulation, and engagement with objections.
-

III. Graduating Senior Self-Assessment and Feedback

Assessment Finding:

Students report confidence in informal reasoning but express less confidence in formal reasoning and in applying logic to broader philosophical problems.

Actions:

1. Strengthen the Logic-to-Philosophy Bridge

- Encourage instructors to include brief logic review units in mid-level courses (e.g., ethics, epistemology, metaphysics).
- Promote explicit connections between logical reasoning skills and broader philosophical debates or theories.

2. Curriculum Coordination and Faculty Awareness

- Increase awareness among instructors regarding logic and reasoning skill development across the curriculum.

3. Survey Question Review

- Conduct a review of Question 4 in the graduating senior survey to identify and resolve any ambiguity.
- Revise question wording to more accurately capture student self-assessments of reasoning skills at graduation.

4. Communication and Reflection

- Share assessment findings with department faculty to encourage reflection and promote curriculum enhancement.

5. Ongoing Assessment and Data Triangulation

- Continue administering the student feedback survey annually, using improved question design to monitor trends over time.

6. Celebrate Strengths and Address Challenges

- Recognize areas of student success while strategically addressing areas for improvement to enhance student experience and learning outcomes.

IV. Follow-Up and Review

- Begin implementation of all action items in **Fall 2026**.
- Continue logic exam assessment in **Fall 2026** to track progress and identify ongoing needs.

1. **Revise Q4** for future surveys:

- Suggested rewording:

“Upon graduation, I believe my ability to reason independently is strong.”

Or

“As of now, I am confident in my ability to reason independently and critically.”

- ### 2. **Include clarifying language** in both Q3 and Q4 about the reference class (e.g., “compared to your skill level when you entered SMU” or “relative to expectations for undergraduate philosophy majors”).
- ### 3. **Flag Q4 data** from this year as potentially unreliable for longitudinal comparison unless supported by qualitative data.

SLO Step 5B: Type of Action:

SLO Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Departmental Meetings and Communication

The Department meets **three to four times per semester** to discuss a broad range of matters, including **curricular planning, teaching strategies, assessment practices, student performance, and faculty development**. These meetings provide a consistent forum for **collaborative decision-making, the exchange of instructional insights**, and the alignment of departmental initiatives with institutional goals.

In addition to formal meetings, faculty members gather **at least once a month for an informal departmental dinner**, where they discuss **research, teaching, and ongoing professional development** in a collegial setting. These gatherings foster a strong sense of community and promote the open exchange of ideas outside the classroom and meeting room.

Attached Files

[Minutes from Dept Mtg May 2024.docx](#)

SLO Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

SLO Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Pedagogical Improvements in PHIL 1301

To support student mastery of foundational logical skills in PHIL 1301, longer assignments were restructured into **shorter, more focused exercises**. This **scaffolding strategy** helps students build confidence and competence with basic concepts before progressing to more complex problems.

Additionally, in one section of PHIL 1301, an experimental **flipped classroom model** was implemented. More in-class time was devoted to **collaborative problem-solving**, with students working in **small groups** to apply logical principles in real time. This approach allowed students to **engage actively with the material**, reinforce their understanding through peer discussion, and learn from one another's reasoning strategies.

SLO Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Fully implemented

Progress:

In Progress

Philosophical Writing.

SLO Step 1A: SLO Number:

2

SLO Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will develop the ability to write clearly, precisely, and persuasively within the specialized genre of philosophical prose. Throughout their coursework, they will learn to articulate complex ideas, construct coherent arguments, and engage critically with philosophical texts and positions through written expression. By the time they graduate, philosophy majors will demonstrate a level of proficiency in philosophical writing, including the ability to present original arguments, respond thoughtfully to opposing views, and adhere to the conventions of philosophical discourse in both structure and style.

SLO Step 2A: Measure:

1. Senior Writing Survey

Graduating seniors will complete an exit survey in which they self-assess both their current ability to write philosophical prose and their development as writers over the course of their undergraduate education.

Each student should affirm one of the following:

1. **Considerable growth** in their ability to write philosophical prose during their time as an undergraduate; **or**
2. **Considerable ability** as a writer of philosophical prose upon graduation.

2. Faculty Assessment of Senior Philosophy Majors' Writing Ability

The writing ability of graduating senior philosophy majors was assessed by philosophy faculty using papers submitted in Spring 2025. Each paper was evaluated on a five-point scale based on the following criteria:

1. Clarity and intelligibility of prose
2. Minimal grammatical and stylistic errors
3. Proper paragraph structure
4. Avoidance of redundancy and excessive verbiage

Attached Files

[Senior Philosophy Major Exit Survey.html](#)

SLO Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Survey, Written paper/project

SLO Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct, Indirect

SLO Step 3A: Target for Measure:

1. Writing Survey

Graduating senior philosophy majors will complete an **exit survey** in which they self-assess both:

- Their growth as writers of philosophical prose during their undergraduate education, and
- Their current ability to write philosophical prose.

Target Outcome: An average score of 5 or higher on either Question 1 or Question 2.

SENIOR PHILOSOPHY MAJOR EXIT SURVEY

Question 1:

I believe that my philosophy courses at SMU helped me improve my writing skills—specifically in terms of cogency, organization and clarity, formulating a good thesis, effectively explaining and critiquing others' arguments, and anticipating and responding to objections.

Scale:

(1) Not at all (2) Slightly (3) Moderately (4) Quite a bit (5) A great deal (6) Tremendously (7) Profoundly

Question 2:

As of the completion of my undergraduate education at SMU, I believe my writing skills (in the areas listed above) are:

Scale:

(1) Poor (2) Mediocre (3) Average (4) Good (5) Very good (6) Excellent (7) Extraordinary

2. Faculty Assessment of Senior Philosophy Majors' Writing Ability

The writing ability of senior philosophy majors was assessed by faculty using papers submitted in Spring 2025. All graduating seniors who submitted papers were evaluated on a five-point scale based on the following criteria:

1. Clarity and intelligibility of prose
2. Minimal grammatical and stylistic errors
3. Proper paragraph structure
4. Avoidance of redundancy and excessive verbiage

The goal was for students to achieve an **average score of at least 4.0** in each of the four categories.

SLO Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

SLO Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

1. Writing Survey

Summary of Student Feedback – SMU Philosophy Courses

Q1: Improvement in Writing Skills

Prompt: “I believe that my philosophy courses at SMU helped me improve my skills in writing.”

- **Average Score:** 4.88
 - **Range:** 3.00 to 7.00
 - **Most Common Response:** *Tremendously* (38%)
 - **Distribution:**
 - Moderately: 13%
 - Quite a bit: 25%
 - Tremendously: 25%
 - Profoundly: 38%
- Takeaway:** Students overwhelmingly reported that SMU philosophy courses contributed significantly to the development of their writing skills, with over 60% selecting either *Tremendously* or *Profoundly*.
-

Q2: Overall Writing Skills Upon Graduation

Prompt: “As of the completion of my undergraduate education at SMU, I believe my writing skills are...”

- **Average Score:** 5.63
 - **Range:** 3.00 to 7.00
 - **Most Common Response:** *Profoundly* (50%)
 - **Distribution:**
 - Moderately: 13%
 - Quite a bit: 13%
 - A great deal: 25%
 - Profoundly: 50%
- Takeaway:** Students expressed a high degree of confidence in their writing abilities upon graduation. Half rated their skills at the highest level (*Profoundly*), and 88% rated themselves at *A great deal* or higher. These results affirm the department’s effectiveness in fostering strong writing competencies.

2. The writing ability of graduating senior philosophy majors was assessed by faculty based on papers submitted in Spring 2025. Each paper was evaluated on a five-point scale using the following criteria:

1. **Clarity and intelligibility of prose** – *Average Score: 4.33*

2. **Minimal grammatical and stylistic errors** – *Average Score: 4.91*
3. **Proper paragraph structure** – *Average Score: 4.41*
4. **Avoidance of redundancy and excessive verbiage** – *Average Score: 4.83*

Attached Files

[SMU Philosophy Feedback Summary.pdf](#)

SLO Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

1. Summary of Student Feedback – SMU Philosophy Courses

Q1: Improvement in Writing Skills

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Takeaway: Students expressed a high degree of confidence in their writing abilities upon graduation. Half rated their skills at the highest level (*Profoundly*), and 88% rated themselves at *A great deal* or higher. These results affirm the department's effectiveness in fostering strong writing competencies.

2. Faculty Assessment of Senior Philosophy Majors' Writing

The writing ability of graduating senior philosophy majors was assessed by faculty based on papers submitted in Spring 2025. Each paper was evaluated on a five-point scale using the following criteria:

1. **Clarity and intelligibility of prose** – *Average Score: 4.33*
2. **Minimal grammatical and stylistic errors** – *Average Score: 4.91*
3. **Proper paragraph structure** – *Average Score: 4.41*
4. **Avoidance of redundancy and excessive verbiage** – *Average Score: 4.83*

These results indicate that, on average, students performed well across all assessed areas of writing.

SLO Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Action Plan: Improving and Assessing Senior Philosophy Majors' Writing

Objectives

1. Ensure graduating seniors report strong growth and ability in philosophical writing, with a **target average score of 5 or higher** on **either** self-assessment question.
2. Ensure senior papers receive an **average faculty-assessed score of at least 4.0** on each of four key writing criteria.

I. Writing Survey: Senior Self-Assessment

Target:

Average score of ≥ 5.0 on either:

- Q1: Growth in writing through philosophy coursework
- Q2: Overall writing ability at graduation

Actions:

1. **Administer the Exit Survey**
 - Collect responses from **most graduating seniors**.
 2. **Promote Writing Awareness Early**
 - Distribute sample high-quality papers to model expectations.
 3. **Use Survey Results for Program Review**
 - Share successful strategies for improving student writing
 - If average score falls below 5, convene faculty to:
-

1. _____

II. Faculty Assessment of Senior Papers

Target:

Average score of ≥ 4.0 on each of the following:

- Clarity and intelligibility of prose
- Minimal grammatical and stylistic errors
- Proper paragraph structure
- Avoidance of redundancy and excessive verbiage

Actions:

1. **Intensive Writing Support**
 - Consider offering optional **peer review sessions** during the senior seminar.
 - Encourage use of SMU's writing center with philosophy-specific appointments.
 - **Senior Seminar in Philosophy – Spring 2026**

We are excited to launch our **first Senior Seminar** in Spring 2026, offered as a pilot course to provide philosophy majors and minors with a unique opportunity to deepen their skills in philosophical writing.

Designed as both a **capstone experience** and a **writing-intensive workshop**, the seminar will focus on helping students refine their ability

to construct clear, rigorous, and original philosophical arguments. Through sustained engagement with advanced topics and iterative writing practice, students will develop habits essential for philosophical work beyond the undergraduate level.

The course will be taught by **Professor Alida Liberman**, a nationally recognized educator in philosophy. Professor Liberman is the recipient of the **APA Award for Excellence in Philosophy Teaching**, the **Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Award**, and is a member of SMU's **Academy of Distinguished Teachers**.

- **Senior Seminar Emphasis**
 - Regular writing assignments
 - Explicit instruction on how to write a philosophy paper
-
- 2. **Data Review & Adjustment**
 - Overall averages by category
 - Weaknesses
- After each assessment cycle, compile and review:

III. Monitoring and Reporting

Responsibility:

- **Department Chair:** Oversees implementation
- **Senior Seminar Instructor:** Integrates writing instruction and feedback
- **Assessment Coordinator:** Manages survey collection and scoring summary

Attached Files

[spring 2026 seminar, Ariana's Sept talk, and call for speaker requests.eml](#)

SLO Step 5B: Type of Action:

SLO Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Departmental Meetings and Communication

The Department meets **three to four times per semester** to discuss a broad range of matters, including **curricular planning, teaching strategies, assessment practices, student performance, and faculty development**. These meetings provide a consistent forum for **collaborative decision-making, the exchange of instructional insights**, and the alignment of departmental initiatives with institutional goals.

In addition to formal meetings, faculty members gather **at least once a month for an informal departmental dinner**, where they discuss **research, teaching, and ongoing professional development** in a collegial setting. These gatherings foster a strong sense of community and promote the open exchange of ideas outside the classroom and meeting room.

Attached Files

[update on spring 2026 seminar, Ariana's Sept talk, and call for speaker requests.eml](#)

SLO Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

SLO Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

PHIL 1300-level (Chuard section): Introduction to Philosophy

Combatting AI Plagiarism:

- - Reintroduced in-class writing assignments and quizzes to reduce reliance on take-home work susceptible to AI use.
 - Modified reading response formats across several courses to discourage AI-generated content.
- Reintroduced quizzes based on **class content**, not readings, to help students prepare for exams.

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- **Senior Seminar Emphasis**
 - Regular writing assignments
 - Explicit instruction on how to write a philosophy paper

SLO Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

In Progress

History of philosophy.

SLO Step 1A: SLO Number:

3

SLO Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will gain in-depth knowledge of the central themes, arguments, and figures that define both ancient and modern philosophy. Their studies will encompass foundational thinkers from the ancient world—such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and the Stoics—as well as pivotal philosophers of the modern period, including Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. By engaging with primary texts and historical contexts, students will develop an understanding of how philosophical ideas have evolved over time and how they continue to influence contemporary thought.

SLO Step 2A: Measure:

Assessment – History of Philosophy Courses (2024–2025)

In both the Fall section of *Ancient Philosophy* and the Spring section of *Modern Philosophy*, each student will complete a major exam or paper (or a set of exams/papers) that will be assessed specifically for demonstrated knowledge of the course subject matter.

These assessments will be evaluated using a five-point scale.

SLO Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Essay exam

SLO Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

SLO Step 3A: Target for Measure:

Performance Target:

The department aims for an average score of 3.5 or higher in each assessment area.

SLO Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Met

SLO Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Assessment Results – Historical Philosophy Competency

Performance Target:

An average score of 3.5 or higher in each assessment area.

Results:

1. **Ancient Philosophy** – Average: 4.1
2. **Modern Philosophy** – Average: 3.6

Attached Files

[3352 paper sample.docx](#)

[Instructions for WA2 Philosophy 3352.docx](#)

[Problems that need addressing.docx](#)

[Ancient sample final f24.pdf](#)

[ancient final exam fall 24.pdf](#)

[Copy of ancient knowledge assessment f24.xlsx](#)

[3352Assesment 2025.xlsx](#)

SLO Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

Assessment Results – Historical Philosophy Competency

Performance Target:

An **average score of 3.5 or higher** in each assessment area.

Results:

1. **Ancient Philosophy** – Average: **4.1**
2. **Modern Philosophy** – Average: **3.6**

Interpretation:

The department met its target in both areas. Student performance in **Ancient Philosophy** was especially strong, and results in **Modern Philosophy** also exceeded the 3.5 benchmark, though with slightly less margin. These outcomes indicate consistent competency in historical areas of the curriculum.

SLO Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Reflections and Changes

1. Increased Target for Assessment Measure

In light of stable performance and recent gains in key areas, we may raise the target

threshold for our student learning assessment in logic. This reflects increased expectations for proficiency in core skills, particularly in translation and basic proof construction.

2. Challenges in Upper-Division Modern Philosophy (PHIL 3352 – Spring 2025)

The instructor of *Modern Philosophy* notes several instructional and cultural challenges that have emerged more prominently in upper-division courses:

- **Student Engagement:** Many students appear externally motivated, inattentive to detail, and unprepared for class discussions. They often fail to read assigned texts in advance, undermining class dialogue and critical engagement.
- **Passive Learning:** Few students take notes or actively participate in class. Many rely on posted lecture materials rather than engaging with the primary texts or in-class discussions.
- **Skill Deficiencies:** Basic reading comprehension and writing skills are weaker than in past cohorts. This is evident in misread quiz questions, shallow grasp of technical terms, and general discomfort with nuanced reasoning.
- **Resistance to Rigor:** Some students dismiss carefully designed assessment questions as "tricky," suggesting an underappreciation of philosophical precision and complexity.

Changes planned for next year:

- Revise and Enhance *Orientation Lecture* at the start of each course, explicitly laying out expectations, reasoning skills required, and the importance of close reading.
 - Continue with recurring reminders via class discussion, Canvas tips, and required supplementary readings on intellectual discipline and critical thinking.
 - Revise and Enhance regular in-class exercises where students interpret sample quiz questions or analyze key textual passages.
 - Explore introducing anonymized examples of strong and weak writing (with appropriate permissions or synthetic examples).
 - Continue to discuss with Department the possibility of coordinated outreach to University Advisors and the Hegi Center to emphasize the importance of academic engagement beyond course selection — possibly by renewing annual meetings with advising staff.
-

3. Innovations planned Ancient Philosophy

The instructor of *Ancient Philosophy* introduced two major curricular innovations::

- **New Content:** Continue to include two new units — **Epicureanism** and **Stoicism** — were added to expand student exposure to Hellenistic schools of thought.
- **Pedagogical Technology:** Continue to experiment with the **Perusall** platform for all readings. This social annotation tool encourages students to engage directly with the texts, comment on philosophical arguments, and respond to each other's ideas in a collaborative online environment.

These changes will increase reading accountability, deepen textual engagement, and foster a more interactive intellectual community.

SLO Step 5B: Type of Action:

SLO Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Communication with Faculty:

These matters were **discussed in person with the appropriate faculty members** and also **addressed through follow-up emails** to ensure clarity and shared understanding.

Attached Files

[emails from Barnes and Hiltz.docx](#)

SLO Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

SLO Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Reflections and Changes

1. Challenges in Upper-Division Modern Philosophy (PHIL 3352 – Spring 2025)

The instructor of *Modern Philosophy* notes several instructional and cultural challenges that have emerged more prominently in upper-division courses:

- **Student Engagement:** Many students appear externally motivated, inattentive to detail, and unprepared for class discussions. They often fail to read assigned texts in advance, undermining class dialogue and critical engagement.
- **Passive Learning:** Few students take notes or actively participate in class. Many rely on posted lecture materials rather than engaging with the primary texts or in-class discussions.
- **Skill Deficiencies:** Basic reading comprehension and writing skills are weaker than in past cohorts. This is evident in misread quiz questions, shallow grasp of technical terms, and general discomfort with nuanced reasoning.
- **Resistance to Rigor:** Some students dismiss carefully designed assessment questions as "tricky," suggesting an underappreciation of philosophical precision and complexity.

Changes made this year:

- *Orientation Lecture* at the start of each course, explicitly laying out expectations, reasoning skills required, and the importance of close reading.
- Recurring reminders via class discussion, Canvas tips, and required supplementary readings on intellectual discipline and critical thinking.
- Regular in-class exercises where students interpret sample quiz questions or analyze key textual passages.
- Discussed the possibility of coordinated outreach to University Advisors and the Hegi Center to emphasize the importance of academic engagement beyond course selection — possibly by renewing annual meetings with advising staff.

3. Innovations in Ancient Philosophy (Fall 2024)

The instructor of *Ancient Philosophy* introduced two major curricular innovations::

- **New Content:** Two new units — **Epicureanism** and **Stoicism** — were added to expand student exposure to Hellenistic schools of thought.
- **Pedagogical Technology:** For the first time, the instructor adopted the **Perusall** platform for all readings. This social annotation tool encourages students to engage directly with the texts, comment on philosophical arguments, and respond to each other's ideas in a collaborative online environment.

These changes were made to increase reading accountability, deepen textual engagement, and foster a more interactive intellectual community.

SLO Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

In Progress

Philosophical positions and arguments.

SLO Step 1A: SLO Number:

4

SLO Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Graduating seniors who are philosophy majors will possess the intellectual skills necessary to comprehend and interpret complex philosophical texts, reconstruct and evaluate arguments with clarity and precision, and engage thoughtfully with diverse philosophical positions across a broad spectrum of traditions and time periods. They will be able to identify underlying assumptions, distinguish valid reasoning from fallacy, and articulate informed responses to foundational and contemporary philosophical questions.

SLO Step 2A: Measure:

1. Senior Self-Assessment Survey

Each year, **senior philosophy majors** will complete a survey designed to elicit their **self-assessment of their understanding** of key philosophical positions and arguments. This instrument provides indirect evidence of student learning and complements our direct assessments of coursework in the major.

2. Each academic year, a designated faculty member will assess a major written assignment or significant examination from an **upper-division course** in one of the department's five core areas of philosophy:

1. Ethics
2. Epistemology
3. Metaphysics
4. Political Philosophy (including Philosophy of Law)
5. Philosophy of Mind

This assessment cycle is designed to ensure that each core area is systematically evaluated **once every five years**, providing a comprehensive view of student learning outcomes across the curriculum.

For the **2024–2025 academic year**, the selected course for assessment is **Philosophy of Psychology**, which falls under the **Philosophy of Mind** category

SLO Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Survey, Written paper/project

SLO Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct, Indirect

SLO Step 3A: Target for Measure:

1. Senior philosophy majors will be administered a survey designed to elicit their self-assessment regarding the extent of their understanding of key philosophical positions and arguments.

Survey Item – Senior Philosophy Major Self-Assessment

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

"I believe that my philosophy courses at SMU provided me with a basic understanding of central philosophical issues, including important theories, arguments for and against such theories, core concepts, and related frameworks."

Response Scale:

- 1 – Not at all
- 2 – Slightly

- 3 – Moderately
- 4 – Quite a bit
- 5 – A great deal
- 6 – Tremendously
- 7 – Profoundly

2. Assessment Method and Target for Phil of Psychology.

The assessed exam or paper is evaluated using a **five-point scale**, with **3.0** representing the benchmark for satisfactory performance.

Our target is for students in the assessed **upper-level course** (Phil of Psychology) to achieve an **average score of at least 3.0**, demonstrating adequate understanding of philosophical positions and arguments in the relevant core area.

SLO Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Met

SLO Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

1. The self-assessment

Q5: Understanding of Central Philosophical Issues

"I believe that my philosophy courses at SMU provided me with a basic understanding of central philosophical

issues..."

- Average Score: 5.38

- Range: 2.00 to 7.00

- Most Common Response: Profoundly (38%)

- Distribution:

- Slightly: 13%

- Quite a bit: 13%

- *A great deal*: 25%

- *Tremendously*: 13%

- *Profoundly*: 38%

2. Each academic year, a designated faculty member will assess a major written assignment or significant examination from an **upper-division course** in one of the department's five core areas of philosophy:

1. Ethics
2. Epistemology
3. Metaphysics
4. Political Philosophy (including Philosophy of Law)
5. Philosophy of Mind

This assessment cycle is designed to ensure that each core area is systematically evaluated **once every five years**, providing a comprehensive view of student learning outcomes across the curriculum.

For the **2024–2025 academic year**, the selected course for assessment is **Philosophy of Psychology**, which falls under the **Philosophy of Mind** category

Result: The target was met. The **average score was 4.5**, exceeding the benchmark of 3.0

Attached Files

[phil of psych.docx](#)

[SMU Philosophy Feedback Summary.pdf](#)

SLO Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

1. 1. The self-assessment

Q5: Understanding of Central Philosophical Issues

"I believe that my philosophy courses at SMU provided me with a basic understanding of central philosophical

issues..."

- Average Score: 5.38

- Range: 2.00 to 7.00

- Most Common Response: Profoundly (38%)

- Distribution:

- Slightly: 13%

- Quite a bit: 13%

- A great deal: 25%

- Tremendously: 13%

- Profoundly: 38%

Takeaway: Students felt confident in their grasp of philosophical concepts.

2. Each academic year, a designated faculty member will assess a major written assignment or significant examination from an **upper-division course** in one of the department's five core areas of philosophy:

1. Ethics
2. Epistemology
3. Metaphysics
4. Political Philosophy (including Philosophy of Law)
5. Philosophy of Mind

This assessment cycle is designed to ensure that each core area is systematically evaluated **once every five years**, providing a comprehensive view of student learning outcomes across the curriculum.

For the **2024–2025 academic year**, the selected course for assessment is **Philosophy of Psychology**, which falls under the **Philosophy of Mind** category

Result: The target was met. The **average score was 4.5**, exceeding the benchmark of 3.0.

Interpretation of Results

Student performance in *Philosophy of Psychology* met or exceeded expectations. The average score of 4.5 indicates that students demonstrated a strong ability to understand and engage with philosophical arguments and positions within this area of philosophy.

The assessment suggests that:

- Course materials and instruction effectively supported the development of core philosophical skills
- Students were able to articulate and critically assess positions related to mind, cognition, and mental representation

SLO Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Action Plan

1. Self-Assessment

- Re-administer the Q5-style item annually to monitor trends.
- Track whether the percentage of *Slightly* or below responses decreases over time.

1. Track Skill Development in Core Areas

- Encourage instructors in epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind to promote argument analysis, conceptual clarity, and engagement with contemporary debates.

2. Maintain a High Standard in Future Assessments

- Set a goal of maintaining or exceeding a 4 average in future assessments of philosophy of mind courses.
- Ensure that future iterations of the courses in this category continue to include assignments that require both conceptual understanding and critical engagement with contemporary scholarship.

3. Prepare for 2025–2026 Core Area Assessment

- Confirm that the next core area in the five-year cycle will be assessed in 2025–2026 (e.g., **Epistemology**).
 - Designate a faculty member to select an appropriate upper-division course and prepare for assessment (e.g., PHIL 3311 – Theory of Knowledge).
-

Long-Term Goals

- By the end of the five-year cycle, the department will have a rich, comparative data set covering student performance across all five core philosophical areas.

This data will inform curriculum updates, identify instructional strengths, and highlight areas in need of targeted development (e.g., through revised assignments, scaffolded writing support, or pedagogical workshops).

SLO Step 5B: Type of Action:

SLO Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Departmental Meetings and Communication

The Department meets **three to four times per semester** to discuss a broad range of matters, including **curricular planning, teaching strategies, assessment practices, student performance, and faculty development**. These meetings provide a consistent forum for **collaborative decision-making, the exchange of instructional insights**, and the alignment of departmental initiatives with institutional goals.

In addition to formal meetings, faculty members gather **at least once a month for an informal departmental dinner**, where they discuss **research, teaching, and ongoing professional development** in a collegial setting. These gatherings foster a strong sense of community and promote the open exchange of ideas outside the classroom and meeting room.

Attached Files

[Philosophy of Psychology and Neuroscience.docx](#)

SLO Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

SLO Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

SLO Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

PHIL 1300-level (Chuard section): Introduction to Philosophy

- **Combatting AI Plagiarism:**
 - Reintroduced in-class writing assignments and quizzes to reduce reliance on take-home work susceptible to AI use.
 - Modified reading response formats across several courses to discourage AI-generated content.
 - Reintroduced quizzes based on **class content**, not readings, to help students prepare for exams.
-

PHIL 3340: Philosophy of Space and Time (Chuard)

- Piloting a **new textbook** on the philosophy of time.
 - Reinstated **in-class reading quizzes** in place of take-home reading assignments.
 - Implemented **in-class paper writing** as an AI deterrent.
-

PHIL 33XX: Philosophy of Neuroscience (*Chuard. New course derived from PHIL 3310*)

- Developed a **new set of readings** focusing on **reduction and emergence** in neuroscience, including work by Barnes.
-

PHIL 3351: Ancient Philosophy (Barnes)

- Created two **new units** on **Epicureanism** and **Stoicism**.
 - Adopted **Perusall** for assigned readings, requiring students to annotate texts and interact with peer commentary.
-

PHIL 3379: Animal Rights (Kazez)

- Added a new **module on wild animals** to reflect current research.
- Updated readings across multiple modules.
- Replaced group field trip assignment with **individualized versions** to improve logistics.
- Introduced **five structured in-class debates**.
- Modified reading responses to minimize AI misuse.

PHIL 3382: Environmental Ethics (Kazez)

- Incorporated **readings by Indigenous authors** for three class sessions.
- Designed a new **empirical reporting assignment**, where students present research tied to class topics.
- Updated readings in several modules.
- Added **five structured debates**.
- Revised reading response assignments to deter AI use.
-

PHIL 1319: Technology, Society, and Value (Crabill)

In **Spring 2024**, 7 new readings were added to broaden the scope of course content. A more substantial revision followed in **Fall 2024**, with the addition of **15 new materials**, including:

- 11 readings
- 2 podcasts
- 2 videos

PHIL 3384: Capitalism and Its Critics(Crabill)

In **Spring 2024**, 9 new readings were introduced to enhance thematic coverage. In **Fall 2024**, 12 new items were incorporated into the course, including:

- 10 readings
- 1 podcast
- 1 video

SLO Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Progress:

Majors and Minors

PG Step 1A: PG Number:

1

PG Step 1C: PG Statement (Full Description):

Recruitment and Enrollment Goal

The department aims to maintain and grow a **robust number of philosophy majors, philosophy minors, ethics minors**, CogSci minors, and Pre-majors, reflecting the value of philosophical study across disciplines and its relevance to students with a wide range of academic and professional interests.

PG Step 2A: Measure:

The number of philosophy majors, philosophy minors, and ethics minors is determined annually based on enrollment data provided by Dedman College each May.

PG Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

PG Step 3A: Target for Measure:

Departmental Enrollment Objectives

The department set the following enrollment targets:

- **Philosophy Majors:** 65 declared
- **Philosophy Minors:** 30
- **Ethics Minors:** 20
- **Cognitive Science Minors:** 15
- **Pre-Majors with Interest in Philosophy:** 10

PG Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Partially Met

PG Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Enrollment Results (as of May 2025)

- **Philosophy Majors:** 45

- **Philosophy Minors:** 31
- **Ethics Minors:** 9
- **Cognitive Science Minors:** 18
- **Philosophy Pre-Majors:** 14

These figures reflect a healthy and diverse level of student engagement across the department's academic programs.

PG Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

Enrollment Results (as of May 2025)

- **Philosophy Majors:** 45
- **Philosophy Minors:** 31
- **Ethics Minors:** 9
- **Cognitive Science Minors:** 18
- **Philosophy Pre-Majors:** 14

We partially met our goal but fell somewhat short. Nevertheless, these figures reflect a healthy and diverse level of student engagement across the department's academic programs.

PG Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Action Plan to Increase Majors, Minors, and Pre-Majors in Philosophy

1. Update and Expand Recruitment Brochure

- **Revise content** to include recent data on graduate admissions, employment outcomes, and emerging career fields (e.g., tech ethics, AI policy).
- **Feature diverse alumni** profiles with photos and career narratives.
- **Include student testimonials** and engaging visuals to reflect the community and classroom experience.
- **Distribute more widely:** place brochures in residence halls, advising offices, high-traffic classroom buildings, and first-year orientation packets.

2. Faculty Class Visits and First-Year Seminar Outreach

- Invite interested students to departmental events and panels.

3. Peer Ambassador Program

- Recruit upper-level philosophy majors to serve as “peer ambassadors” who share their experiences with prospective students.
- Ambassadors will table at major/minor fairs.

4. Enhanced Web and Social Media Presence

- Update department website with clearer info on degree options, outcomes, and student opportunities.
- Launch an Instagram or TikTok account showcasing student life, faculty spotlights, and upcoming events.

5. Targeted Events and Programming

- Host events designed to attract students from other disciplines (e.g., “Philosophy and Medicine,” “AI and Ethics,” “Philosophy in Law and Policy”).
- Create co-branded events with departments like Computer Science, Political Science, and Business.

6. Track and Follow Up with Interested Students

- Develop a system (e.g., interest forms at events, advising meetings) to track students who express interest.
- Follow up each semester with invitations to courses, advising, and events.

PG Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

PG Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue:

Departmental Meetings and Communication

The Department meets **three to four times per semester** to discuss a broad range of matters, including **curricular planning, teaching strategies, assessment practices, student performance, and faculty development**. These meetings provide a consistent forum for **collaborative decision-making, the exchange of instructional insights**, and the alignment of departmental initiatives with institutional goals.

In addition to formal meetings, faculty members gather **at least once a month for an informal departmental dinner**, where they discuss **research, teaching, and ongoing professional development** in a collegial setting. These gatherings foster a strong sense of community and promote the open exchange of ideas outside the classroom and meeting room.

Attached Files

[Re_Assessment numbers_majors minors etc.eml](#)

PG Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

PG Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

PG Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Recruitment Materials

We produced and distributed a full-color brochure aimed at informing and attracting students considering a major in philosophy. The brochure highlights:

- Common career paths for philosophy majors
- Comparative data showing the strong performance of philosophy majors on entrance exams for graduate school, law school, medical school, and business school
- Notable public figures who majored in philosophy

(See attached file for full brochure.)

Attached Files

[new phil brochure.pdf](#)

PG Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

In Progress

Overall, the Philosophy BA assessment report is **exemplary across nearly all rubric dimensions**. The department shows a high level of engagement, uses strong and appropriate measures, documents thoughtful faculty dialogue, and provides detailed action plans that demonstrate ongoing improvement. The report reflects a department that takes teaching, learning, and assessment seriously.

There are only a **few small opportunities for improvement**, mostly related to tightening language, refining documentation, or adding minor clarifications. What follows is the full summary of strengths and growth areas, consistent with the analysis provided previously.

Mission Statement

The mission statement includes several strengths: it aligns with SMU's mission, emphasizes rigor, and identifies core curricular elements. However, it reads somewhat like a list of offerings plus institutional language. A stronger, more focused mission statement would clarify:

- the distinctive purpose of the Philosophy BA,
- the student experience the program aims to create, and
- how the program embodies the values of philosophical study.

This is a small opportunity rather than a major issue—just a chance to sharpen the statement so it feels more purpose-driven and less catalog-like.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The SLOs—especially in logic, writing, philosophical positions, and history—are well aligned with disciplinary standards and clearly reflect what the department values. They are measurable, appropriate for a BA program, and supported by robust assessment methods.

Small opportunity: Some SLOs (especially SLO 1) are quite long and include multiple goals in a single statement. Condensing each outcome into one clear, measurable action verb would make them easier to assess and more consistent with the rubric.

But overall, the SLOs are strong and thoughtfully constructed.

Measures and Targets

The Philosophy BA uses excellent measures: logic exams assessed with rubrics, senior papers evaluated with clear criteria, upper-division course assessments on a five-year rotation, and senior self-assessments that complement the direct evidence.

Only a few light-touch suggestions:

- Several measure descriptions could explicitly state the rubrics being used (even if they are attached).
- Targets would be stronger with a brief rationale—for example, noting whether the threshold reflects past performance, faculty consensus, or national expectations.

These are refinements, not weaknesses. The measures themselves are appropriate and the data analysis is exemplary.

Program Goals (PGs)

The program includes a very strong operational goal focused on **enrollment and recruitment**, supported by thoughtful action steps (brochures, peer ambassadors, events, advising outreach, etc.). This is an excellent example of a measurable, realistic, program-level goal.

One small improvement:

The rubric typically expects more than one PG. The department could easily add another in areas such as:

- curriculum development,
- strengthening writing or logic instruction,
- enhancing student engagement,
- faculty development, or
- assessment process improvements.

But the one PG included is exemplary in clarity and execution.

Results, Action Plans, and Status Updates

The results are clearly reported and demonstrate a strong pattern of student success—especially in writing, reasoning, and historical philosophy. The logic exam analysis is especially thorough, with thoughtful reflection on translation vs. proof skills. The senior papers show excellent argument clarity and writing quality. The five-year cycle for core areas is well structured and functioning as intended.

The **action plans are a major strength** of the report. They are concrete, detailed, and connected directly to findings:

- new senior seminar,
- logic scaffolding,
- combatting AI misuse,
- new reading modules,
- expanded content in multiple courses,
- Perusall integration,
- revised assessments,
- faculty development and dialogue.

These action plans clearly demonstrate that assessment data is actively used to improve instruction—exactly what the rubric looks for.