



Philosophy Department Curriculum Review 2017

May 9th, 2017

1 PROGRAM CONTEXT

The Department of Philosophy is one of the oldest departments at the University of Calgary, with a history that dates back to before the University was established. We are among the top research philosophy departments in Canada, with internationally recognized expertise in Philosophy of Biology, the History of Analytic Philosophy, Philosophy of Action, Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Language. This research contributes to several of the University of Calgary's strategic research themes, including Brain and Mental Health, Engineering Solutions for Health, Infections, Inflammation and Chronic Diseases in the Changing Environment, and Human Dynamics in a Changing World. Philosophy courses are required by other programs, including Computer Science and Nursing, and the Philosophy Department contributes faculty to courses taught in other programs, including ASHA and MDSC, and WMST.

The Department of Philosophy has offered undergraduate and graduate programs continuously since 1968. Currently we offer a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Philosophy, both a thesis-based and a course-based Masters degree, and the Ph.D. As of Fall 2016 we have 118 students registered in our undergraduate degree programs, and over 3000 students enrolled in our 2016/2017 classes.

As reflected in the surveys we undertook for the purposes of this report, our undergraduate students are, on the whole, extremely pleased with their education. Over 75% of current majors are highly satisfied with the department, and 80% report thinking about philosophical issues outside of class. Students are extremely positive about our faculty as well: 94% of students report being satisfied with how much their professors engage with them. As one representative student comment put it, "It is uncommon for

me to have a professor I do not find great.” Nearly every professor in the Department was explicitly singled out for praise.

2 PROGRAM-LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Department aims to impart to its graduates both depth and breadth of philosophical knowledge, as well as skills in reasoning, oral and written argumentation, and interpretation and critical analysis. We make these aims explicit in the following program-level learning outcomes:

- Broad knowledge of diverse philosophical issues, problems, traditions, and views.
- Deep knowledge of at least one central area of philosophical inquiry.
- Ability to critically digest, interpret, and analyze complex sources.
- Ability to write a convincing argument that takes adequate account of alternative positions.
- Ability to engage in constructive, respectful oral and written argumentation.

3 GUIDING QUESTIONS

In conducting this curriculum review, our evidence-gathering, discussions, and data analysis were conducted with the following questions in mind:

- Do our current courses answer student demands?
- What are the pathways through our various courses, programs, and concentrations? (For example, do lower-level courses adequately train for upper-level courses; do our requirements, prerequisites, or courses provide obstructions to majoring or enrolling in other minors or concentrations?)
- How do our students take advantage of their education post-graduation?
- What are the strengths of our program, in terms of research, diversity of teaching approaches, and our larger role in the University?

4 INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTION PLAN

The Department conducted three surveys prior to completion of this report: one survey of current majors, a second survey of current undergraduates who at one point were majoring in Philosophy but who left the program, and third survey of Philosophy alumni. The surveys were uniformly positive, especially about instruction quality and course content. But one major concern stood out in all three surveys: worries about career prospects post-graduation. While all reliable data shows that philosophy majors have

relatively high mid-career median salaries, and that philosophy majors have—unlike majors in related disciplines—managed to maintain high rates of employability,¹ the Department needs to take steps to educate its students about their options as well as to increase the visibility of our graduates to the Calgary professional community. Accordingly, a number of items in our action plan concern one of these two goals.

A second—though less frequently mentioned—concern regarded diversity of course options and flexibility of scheduling. While the Philosophy major offers considerable freedom in its course outcomes, unpredictable circumstances can make fulfilling upper-level requirements burdensome. Several items in the action plan aim at alleviating this burden.

Finally, in the profession of philosophy at large there is underrepresentation of women and other minorities, as well as a perception that the subject-matter is overly-narrow in both subject matter and heritage. The percentage of Philosophy majors who are women at University of Calgary has remained fairly constant around 33%—the national average—and our courses cover a large range of subject matter and tradition. Our suggestions on this issue are designed to ensure that we continue our already excellent tradition of inclusivity.

5 ACTION PLAN

Mirroring the discussion in Sect. 4, the Department’s Action Plan has three components: 1) career-related action items, 2) curriculum-related action items, and 3) Diversity and Climate-related action items.

Career-Related Action Items

Action Item	Timeline	Responsible Lead	Rationale	Evidence Source
Establish faculty LinkedIn network with alumni	Ongoing	Graduate Program Director	Improve job placement and prospects at both the undergraduate and graduate level.	Student Surveys
Apply for placement grant	Ongoing	Undergraduate Director	Develop a network and methods for improving career prospects for graduates.	Student Surveys

¹ https://www.newyorkfed.org/research/college-labor-market/college-labor-market_compare-majors.html

Establish Placement Coordinator	Short term	Department Head	Aid transition to post-graduate career	Student Surveys
Consult with existing University Coop and Alumni Relations Programs	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Compile list of resources available for graduates	Student Surveys
Consult with other programs and units within the University	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Research methods used to facilitate transition post-graduation	Student Surveys
Organize alumni speakers/panel	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Provide information on post-graduate prospects	Student Surveys
Investigate organizations/companies/non-profits that might have an interest in working with our graduates	Ongoing	Placement Coordinator	Improve career resources and connections for graduates.	Student Surveys
Establish contact with internship programs (e.g. SCiP)	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Increase participation in internship program and link program with other efforts.	Student Surveys
Compile Professional Resource List: a list of likely organizations, internships, and coop programs alumni might find positions with	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Increase awareness of options post-graduation	Student Surveys
Distribute Professional Resource list to Departmental Advisors and the Undergraduate Philosophy Club	Ongoing	Placement Coordinator	Increase awareness of options post-graduation	Student Surveys
Organize annual professional orientation workshops for majors	Medium term	Placement Coordinator	Increase awareness of options post-graduation	Student Surveys
Advertise Co-op Program (for example, on the Departmental Website, during annual orientation workshops, through the Undergraduate Club)	Short term	Placement Coordinator	Increase participation in co-op program and link program with other placement efforts	Student Surveys
Advertise Professional Resource List (for example, on the Departmental Website, during annual orientation workshops, through the Undergraduate Club)	Medium term	Placement Coordinator	Increase awareness of options post-graduation	Student Surveys

Curriculum-Related Action Items

Action Item	Timeline	Responsible Lead	Rationale	Evidence Source
CLOs on course outlines	Ongoing	Department Head	Make students aware of what is expected of them in their courses	Student Surveys
Schedule 400 sp/su online classes	Short term	Timetable Committee	Increase diversity of courses and options for majors at the 400 level	Student Surveys

Provide training resources for online instruction	Short term	Department Head	Ensure quality of new offerings	Student Surveys
Recruit online instructors	Short term	Department Head	Increase diversity of courses and options for majors at the 400 level	Student Surveys
Change 379 requirement for Honours to include other quantitative courses	Short term	Undergraduate Director	Better serve the philosophical interests of individual students	Student Surveys
Develop Guidance Document for 279	Short term	279 instructors	Increase phil major satisfaction with the logic requirement (Phil Major Surveys)	Student Surveys
Retitle History Courses	Short term	Undergraduate Committee in consultation with History instructors	More effectively convey the history curriculum to potential students	Curriculum Mapping Data
Streamline History Courses:	Medium term	Undergraduate Committee in consultation with History instructors	Ensure course offerings meet student needs/demand	Curriculum Mapping Data
Introduce new Existentialism Class	Short term	Undergraduate Committee	Increase diversity of philosophical perspectives taught	Curriculum Mapping Data and Student Surveys
Introduce new 400-level Continental Philosophy class	Short term	Undergraduate Committee	Increase diversity of philosophical traditions taught	Curriculum Mapping Data and Student Surveys
Reduce number of required 400/500-level courses to 4 FCEs	Short term	Undergraduate Director	Increase diversity of course options and for majors	Student Surveys

Climate-Related Action Items

Action Item	Timeline	Responsible Lead	Rationale	Evidence Source
Establish and maintain CDC	Ongoing	Department Head	Ensure a welcoming environment for members of underrepresented groups	OIA Data
Administer Climate questionnaire	Ongoing	Climate and Diversity Committee Chair	Ensure a welcoming environment for members of underrepresented groups	OIA Data

Implement BPA/SWIP Good Practice Scheme	Short Term	Climate and Diversity Committee	Ensure a welcoming environment for members of underrepresented groups	OIA Data
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